

Battle of the Carrier Planes

4 June 1942

While the land-based fliers had their morning go at the Japanese *Striking Force*, and while Nagumo juggled his planes and decisions, Spruance steamed southeast to lead off the attack against the enemy. The American admiral intended to hold his planes until he drew within about 100 miles of the Japanese. But when he heard of the strike on Midway, Spruance launched two hours before this intended range would have been reached. By this calculated risk he hoped to catch the Japanese planes back on their carriers rearming for a second attack of the atoll. And about twenty minutes later Nagumo made the decision which set up himself and his planes as exactly the target Spruance hoped his pilots would find.¹

Enterprise and *Hornet* began launching at about 0700, sending off every operational plane they carried, except a few to cover

¹In his introduction to *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Spruance writes: "In reading the account of what happened on 4 June, I am more than ever impressed with the part that good or bad fortune sometimes plays in tactical engagements. The authors give us credit, where no credit is due, for being able to choose the exact time for our attack on the Japanese carriers when they were at the greatest disadvantage—flight decks full of aircraft fueled, armed and ready to go. All that I can claim credit for, myself, is a very keen sense of the urgent need for surprise and a strong desire to hit the enemy carriers with our full strength as early as we could reach them."

the task force. The strike was led by 29 Devastator (TBD-1) torpedo bombers, and these were followed by 67 Dauntless dive bombers and 20 Wildcat fighters. Eighteen other Wildcats, plus a like number withheld to relieve them later, patrolled overhead. *Yorktown* held back its planes for about two hours; Fletcher considered that the aircraft from his carrier might be needed against other enemy carriers not yet located, but by 0838 there had been no enemy sightings, and he decided to launch half his dive bombers and all his torpedo planes, along with escorting fighters. By shortly after 0900 the *Yorktown* had 17 SBD's, 12 TBD's, and six F4F-3's in the air, and other planes ready for takeoff.

As Spruance had hoped, Nagumo continued for more than an hour to steam toward Midway, and the first U. S. planes found the Japanese *Carrier Striking Force* with its flattops in the center of a larger formation consisting of two battleships, three cruisers, and 11 destroyers. By 0917, Nagumo had recovered his Midway attack planes, and at that time he made a 90-degree change of course to east-northeast. This course change caused 35 of the *Hornet's* SBD's and escorting fighters to miss the battle, but *Hornet's* torpedo planes found the enemy and went in low without fighter cover.

The 15 obsolete Devastators met heavy antiaircraft fire from the Japanese *Strik-*

ing Force, and pulled down upon themselves the bulk of the Zeroes patrolling overhead. Against this combined fire, few of the planes got close enough to Japanese ships to launch torpedoes, and again, as in the Coral Sea battle, any hits scored by the slow unreliable torpedoes of that period proved duds. This antiaircraft and fighter opposition started while the planes had yet eight miles to go to reach the Japanese ships, and only one Devastator pilot lived to pull up from this attack.²

The 14 TBD's from the *Enterprise* fared only a little better. Four of these planes, likewise striking without fighter escort, survived their torpedo runs against the Japanese ships, although they scored no hits. But these two Devastator attacks, costly as they were, served to pull down the Zero canopy to such a low altitude that the following SBD's from *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* had an easier time of it.

These Dauntless dive bombers came in at about 1020 while Nagumo's ships still were dodging the Devastators. The *Akagi* took two hits which set her afire, and Admiral Nagumo transferred his flag to the light cruiser *Nagara*.³ The *Kaga* sustained four hits, and at 1925 she blew up and sank. The *Soryu* was hit three times by the planes and also struck by three torpedoes from the submarine *Nautilus* which arrived on the scene between 1359 and 1495.⁴ Finally the

Soryu's gasoline stowage exploded and broke the ship in half.

By 1030, Nagumo had lost the services of three carriers, and in all three cases, as Spruance had hoped, the American attack had caught the ships in process of refueling and rearming the planes of their Midway strike. But even with these ships and their planes gone, Nagumo still was determined to fight back with his surviving carrier, the *Hiryu*, which had escaped damage by getting far out of position in some of the earlier evasive actions to escape the torpedo planes. "Although defeat now stared the Japanese starkly in the face, they felt that the battle had to be continued as long as we retained even a small part of our striking power."⁵

When the *Akagi* was shot from under Nagumo, the Japanese *Striking Force* commander temporarily passed his command to Rear Admiral Hiroaki Abe on board the heavy cruiser *Tone*, and command of air operations simultaneously passed to Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi in the *Hiryu*. At about 1050 two float planes from the cruiser *Chikuma* sighted the *Yorktown* task group and guided to it a strike of 18 dive bombers and six fighters up from the *Hiryu*. The U. S. air patrol and antiaircraft fire knocked down or turned back most of these enemy planes which arrived

not the *Soryu* but the *Kaga*, and that the one torpedo which actually hit proved a dud.

⁵ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 191. In *Coral Sea and Midway*, at page 132, Adm Morison points out that the Japanese at this time assumed from scout plane reports that the U. S. force had no more than two carriers, and possibly only one. The Japanese authors in *Battle That Doomed Japan* point out on page 174, however, that while the torpedo planes were yet approaching for their first strike against Nagumo, "Reports of enemy planes increased until it was quite evident that they were not from a single carrier."

² Ensign George H. Gay was this sole survivor. His plane splashed shortly after he had pulled up from his run which had skimmed a carrier deck at about 10 feet. Gay's gunner had been killed, but Gay was rescued from his life raft next day by a Catalina.

³ Although the *Akagi* remained afloat, she was abandoned at 1915 and later scuttled by a torpedo from one of her screening destroyers.

⁴ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 185, 189-191, presents strong evidence to indicate that this was

at about noon, but those that got through scored three hits which started fires. Within 20 minutes the big carrier was dead in the water.

Her crew got her underway again in about an hour, but a second strike from the *Hiryu* appeared early in the afternoon. Although the Japanese lost half of the 10 Kate torpedo bombers and six Zero fighters of this attack, four of the Kates came in to attack the *Yorktown* at masthead level. Launching at a range of about 500 yards, two of the torpedo planes scored hits which left the carrier not only dead in the water but listing so badly that she was abandoned a few minutes later.⁶

Meanwhile, one of *Yorktown's* search planes (one of 10 scout bombers sent out before the first attack on the ship) spotted the *Hiryu*, two battleships, three cruisers, and four destroyers at 1445, and reported the position of these enemy ships. At 1530 Spruance had 24 SBD's⁷ up from the *Enterprise*, and they found the *Hiryu* and her screening ships at 1700. Using the same tactics which had paid off in their morning attacks, the dive bombers scored four hits which finished operations for Nagumo's

⁶ The speed with which her crew had put *Yorktown* in shape after the first attack led the Japanese to believe that this second strike was against a different carrier. They had by now spotted all three U. S. carriers, but at this point they thought they had destroyed two of them. This second strike still did not finish the battered carrier, however. She remained afloat and regained some degree of equilibrium without human aid. Salvage parties went on board the following day, and the ship was taken under tow. But one of Nagumo's float planes spotted her early on 5 June, and a submarine was sent out to finish her off. The sub found the carrier on the 6th, put two torpedoes in her, and she finally went down early on 7 June.

⁷ Ten of these were refugees from *Yorktown*, and the others veterans of the earlier strikes.

fourth and last flattop.⁸ The bombing cost three SBD's and their crews.

During all this action Admiral Yamamoto, still miles to the rear, considered himself fortunate to have drawn out the U. S. Pacific Fleet. Shortly after noon, when he heard of the *Hiryu's* first strike against the *Yorktown*, the Japanese commander ordered the *Aleutian Screening Group* and Admiral Kondo's *Second Fleet* to join his *Main Body* by noon the next day to finish off the U. S. ships and complete the occupation of Midway. And a full hour and twenty minutes after he heard of the fate of Nagumo's final carrier, Admiral Yamamoto sent out a message in which he reported the U. S. fleet "practically destroyed and . . . retiring eastward," and he called on Nagumo, the *Invasion Force* (less *Cruiser Division 7*) and the *Submarine Force* to "immediately contact and attack the enemy." A stimulating message, but "In the light of the whole situation . . . so strangely optimistic as to suggest that Commander in Chief was deliberately trying to prevent the morale of our forces from collapsing."⁹

Nagumo's morale obviously needed to be stimulated by stronger stuff; at 2130 he reported: "Total enemy strength is 5 carriers, 6 heavy cruisers, and 15 destroyers. They are steaming westward. We are retiring to the northwest escorting *Hiryu*. Speed, 18 knots."¹⁰ Yamamoto's answer

⁸ The *Hiryu* floated in flames until, as in the case of the *Akagi*, one of the ships of her screening force put her to death with torpedoes at 0510 next morning. *ONI Review*, 13.

⁹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 213.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* To which message the authors quote a response by one of Yamamoto's staff officers, who, they say, "voiced the dejection of the entire Combined Fleet staff. . . ." Made by Rear Admiral Matome Ugaki, Yamamoto's chief of staff,

relieved Nagumo of command in favor of Rear Admiral Kondo; but later messages told the commander in chief that there was little chance of finding the U. S. Fleet until after dawn next day. At 0255 on 5 June the admiral changed his mind, abandoned the Midway venture, and ordered a general withdrawal.

Admiral Spruance, now more on his own than ever, following Fletcher's move from the damaged *Yorktown* to the *Astoria*,¹¹ of course did not know of Yamamoto's decision; but he did know that vastly more powerful enemy surface forces could well be nearby, quite possibly with additional carriers that had come in with the *Main Body* or with another enemy force. His problem, as he saw it, was to avoid combat in which he could be hopelessly outclassed, especially at night, and yet at the same time keep within air support distance of Midway in case the Japanese should persist in their assault plans. This he succeeded in doing, but in the process lost contact with the enemy fleet. He did not regain contact until 6 June.

In the early morning hours of 5 June, however, a retiring Japanese column of four cruisers and two destroyers was sighted by U. S. submarine *Tambor*; and when the Japanese sighted the *Tambor*, evasive action resulted in a collision of their cruisers, *Mogami* and *Mikuma*. While the other Japanese cruisers retired at full speed, these two lagged behind

with the destroyers to screen them, the *Mogami* with a damaged bow and the *Mikuma* trailing oil. The submarine continued to stalk these four ships, did not manage to gain a firing position, but at break of day reported their position.

Captain Simard sent 12 B-17's out from Midway to attack these ships, but the Flying Fortresses had trouble locating their targets, and Simard then ordered a Marine bombing squadron off on this mission. Captain M. A. Tyler with six SBD-2's and Captain Richard E. Fleming with six SB2U-3's took off at about 0700 to attack the ships which were then reported to be 170 miles west of the atoll. They located the ships at about 0800, and Tyler led his division out of the sun toward the stern of the *Mogami* while Fleming and the other Vindicator pilots went down at the *Mikuma*.

Both divisions met heavy antiaircraft fire, but Tyler and his fliers bracketed their target with six near misses which caused some topside damage to the *Mogami*.¹² Fleming's plane was hit, but the pilot stayed on course at the head of his attack formation and crashed his plane into the *Mikuma's* after gun turret.¹³ This additional damage further slowed the

¹² *USSBS Interrogations*, Nav No 83, RAdm Akira Soji, I, 363. Adm (then Capt) Soji had command of the *Mogami* during this action.

¹³ Fleming's dive "... crashed into the after turret, spreading fire over the air intake of the starboard engine room. This caused an explosion of gas fumes below, killing all hands working in the engine room. This was a damaging blow to the cruiser, hitherto unscathed except for the slight hull damage received in the collision with *Mogami*. Both cruisers were now hurt, and they continued their westward withdrawal with darkening prospects of escaping the enemy's fury." *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 226.

the statement must likewise be considered a classic of understatement: "The Nagumo Force has no stomach for a night engagement!"

¹¹ Shortly after 1300 on 4 June, Spruance radioed his disposition and course to Fletcher on board the *Astoria*, and asked if Fletcher had instructions for him. Fletcher replied: "None. Will conform to your movements." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 141n.

cruisers, and Admiral Spruance's carrier planes found the cripples the following day, the 6th. The attack of these planes sank the *Mikuma* and inflicted enough additional damage on the *Mogami* to keep her out of the war for the next two years.

The Battle of Midway—which many historians and military experts consider the decisive naval engagement of the Pacific War—was over, and all actions following those of 4 June were anti-climactic. The U. S. had lost 98 carrier planes of all types, and would lose the *Yorktown*, then under tow. The Japanese carriers sustained total losses of about 322 planes of all types.¹⁴ And with the four carriers had gone the cream of their experienced naval pilots. This, along with later losses in air battles over Guadalcanal, was a blow from which the Japanese never fully recovered.¹⁵

Although the carrier planes had decided the large issue, the contribution of Marines to the defense of Midway had been considerable, from the inception of base development to the end of the action. Not only had the 3d and 6th Defense Battalions contributed their share of labor, vigilance, and flak, but the aviation personnel of MAG-22, at a cost rarely surpassed in the history of U. S. naval aviation, had faced a superior enemy and exacted serious damage. At a cost of 49 Marines killed and 53 wounded, Midway had destroyed some 43 enemy aircraft (25 dive bombers and 18 Zeros) in air action, plus another 10 shot down by anti-aircraft guns.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 250. This figure may be suspect. It exceeds considerably the regular complement of the four carriers.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the "crack-man policy" of the Japanese Navy Air Force, see *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 242-243.

¹⁶ These are reported figures based on the soundest possible estimates. The Japanese account in

In another air-air action, similar to that at Coral Sea, Fletcher and Spruance had sent the proud *Imperial Fleet* scurrying home to Japan without firing a shot from its superior naval rifles. Yamamoto could gain little consolation from the fact that the northern operation had secured two Aleutian bases: what good the bowl if the rice is gone? For ". . . unlike most of the Nipponese war lords, [Yamamoto] appreciated American strength and resources."¹⁷ He knew that destruction of the U. S. Fleet early in 1942 was a necessary prerequisite to the year's plans for control of the Coral Sea and the American sea lanes to Australia and New Zealand, and, in the final analysis, the necessary prerequisite to the success of Japan's entire war effort.¹⁸

But now that the Japanese clearly were defeated at Midway, they no longer could overlook the setback they had received at Coral Sea in phase one of their 1942 plans, and phase three—occupation of the Fijis, Samoa and New Caledonia—soon was scrapped. "The catastrophe of Midway definitely marked the turning of the tide in the Pacific War . . ." ¹⁹ and from arrogant offense the Japanese soon turned to chagrined defense and ultimate defeat. U. S. plans for a first offensive already were well advanced, and the rest of 1942 was destined to be a most gloomy period for the Japanese.

In *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Fuchida and Okumiya devote their final chapter to a scholarly and complete analysis of this

Battle That Doomed Japan does not bear them out. The authors list only six planes lost in the Midway strike and 12 in combat air patrol.

¹⁷ *Coral Sea and Midway*, 75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 60.

¹⁹ *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 231.

defeat, and they end on an introspective note:

In the final analysis, the root cause of Japan's defeat, not alone in the Battle of Midway but in the entire war, lies deep in the Japanese national character. There is an irrationality and impulsiveness about our people which results in actions that are haphazard and often contradictory. A tradition of provincialism makes us narrow-minded and dogmatic, reluctant to discard prejudices and slow to adopt even necessary improvements if they require a new concept. Indecisive and vacillating, we succumb readily to deceit, which in turn makes us disdainful of others. Opportunistic but lacking a spirit of daring and independence, we are wont to place reliance on others and to truckle to superiors.

Our want of rationality often leads us to confuse desire with reality, and thus to do things without careful planning. Only when our hasty action has ended in failure do we begin to think rationally about it, usually for the purpose of finding excuses for the failure. In short, as a nation, we lack maturity of mind and the necessary conditioning to enable us to know when and what to sacrifice for the sake of our main goal.

Such are the weaknesses of the Japanese national character. These weaknesses were reflected in the defeat we suffered in the Battle of Midway, which rendered fruitless all the valiant deeds and precious sacrifices of the men who fought there. In these weaknesses lies the cause of Japan's misfortunes.²⁰

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 247-248.

PART VI

The Turning Point: Guadalcanal

Background and Preparations¹

Scarcely had Admiral Yamamoto pulled his *Combined Fleet* away from its defeat at Midway before the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff began reconsidering basic Pacific policy. They wanted an offensive which would aid containment of the Japanese advances toward Australia and safeguard the U. S. communication lines to the Anzac area. As early as 18 February, Admiral

Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief of the U. S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, told Chief of Staff George C. Marshall that he considered it necessary to garrison certain South and Southwest Pacific islands with Army troops² in preparation for launching U. S. Marines on an early offensive against the enemy.³ And shortly after the Battle of the Coral Sea, General MacArthur advanced plans for an attack against the Japanese at Rabaul. For this move he requested aircraft carriers, additional troops, and more planes.⁴ But Nimitz rejected this plan. His carriers were too precious for commitment in waters so restricted as the Solomon Sea, he told the general. Besides, the admiral had a plan of his own. He wanted to capture Tulagi with one Marine raider battalion.⁵ Admiral King's reaction to this plan was initially favorable, but on 1 June he sided with Marshall and MacArthur that the job could not be done by one battalion. (See Map 11)

¹ Unless otherwise noted the material used in Part VI is derived from 1st MarDiv FinalRept on the Guadalcanal Operation, Phases I through V, issued June-August 1943, hereinafter cited as *FinalRept* (with Phase No); action reports, war diaries, and journals of the various units which served with or as part of the 1st MarDiv; *Marine Air History*; *Strategic Planning*; W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate (eds.), *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan—The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); J. Miller, Jr., *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: HistDiv, DA 1949), hereinafter cited as *Miller, Guadalcanal*; S. E. Morison, *The Struggle for Guadalcanal—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), hereinafter cited as *Struggle for Guadalcanal*; Capt H. L. Merillat, *The Island* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), hereinafter cited as *The Island*; Maj J. L. Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Operation* (Washington: HistDiv, HQMC, 1949); VAdm R. Tanaka with R. Pineau, "Japan's Losing Struggle for Guadalcanal," two parts, *USNI Proceedings*, July and August 1956, Copyright 1956 by the U. S. Naval Institute, hereinafter cited as *Tanaka Article*. Specific citations of material, in addition to direct quotations, taken from *FinalRept* have been noted where the information presented may be of special interest.

² CominCh ltr to CofSA, 18Feb42 (located at NHD).

³ Specific mention of Marines for assault work came after Marshall questioned King's plans and asked why these FMF troops could not perform the garrison duty. CofSA ltr to CominCh, 24Feb42; CominCh ltr to CofSA, 2Mar42 (located at NHD).

⁴ CinCSWPA msg to CofSA, 8May42 (located at OCMH).

⁵ CinCPac ltr to CinCSWPA, 28May42 (located at NHD).

But now time and the victory at Midway had improved the U. S. position in the Pacific, and on 25 June Admiral King advised Nimitz and Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, Commander of South Pacific Forces,⁶ to prepare for an offensive against the Lower Solomons. Santa Cruz Island, Tulagi, and adjacent areas would be seized and occupied by Marines under CinCPac, and Army troops from Australia then would form the permanent occupation garrison.⁷ D-Day would be about 1 August.

The task seemed almost impossible. Ghormley had just taken over his Pacific job after a hurried trip from London where he had been Special Naval Observer and Commander of U. S. Naval Forces in Europe; the 1st Marine Division, slated for the Solomon landing, was making an administrative move from the United States to New Zealand; and Marshall and King continued to debate matters of command. The general contested the Navy's right to command the operation. The area lay in the Southwest Pacific, Marshall pointed out, and so MacArthur ought to be in charge.⁸

Never mind arbitrary geography, King's reply seemed to say. The forces involved would not come from MacArthur, but from the South Pacific; and King doubted that MacArthur could help the operation much even if he wanted to. The Southwest

Pacific's nearest land-based bomber field was 975 miles from Tulagi. The command setup must be made with a view toward success, King said, but the primary consideration was that the operation be begun at once. He stated unequivocally that it must be under Nimitz, and that it could not be conducted in any other way.⁹

The Joint Chiefs resolved this conflict on 2 July with issuance of the "Joint Directive for Offensive Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area Agreed on by the United States Chiefs of Staff." The directive set the seizure of the New Britain-New Ireland-New Guinea area as the objective of these operations, but it broke this goal down into three phases designed to resolve the dispute between MacArthur and Nimitz. Phase One would be the seizure of the islands of Santa Cruz and Tulagi, along with positions on adjacent islands. Nimitz would command this operation, with MacArthur concentrating on interdiction of enemy air and naval activity to the west. And to remove MacArthur's geographic claim on the Phase One target area, the Joint Chiefs shifted the boundary between the general and Admiral Nimitz to place the Lower Solomons in the admiral's South Pacific area. MacArthur then would take command of Phase Two, seizure of other Solomon Islands plus positions on New Guinea, and of Phase Three, the capture of Rabaul and adjacent bases in New Britain and New Ireland. Questions of timing, establishment of task organizations, and arrangements for command changes from one area to another would be governed by the Joint Chiefs.

Preparation of this directive in Washington had prompted King's warning

⁶ Two days earlier a message from Nimitz gave Ghormley the Midway victory tally and suggested that the carriers now might be made available for support of an operation against the Solomon Islands. ComSoPac War Diary, June 1942 (located at NHD).

⁷ CominCh disp to CinCPac and ComSoWesPac-For, 25Jun42 (located at NHD).

⁸ CofSA ltr to CominCh, 26Jun42 (located at NHD).

⁹ CominCh ltr to CofSA, 26Jun42 (located at NHD).

order which Ghormley received on 25 June; and when the directive arrived in the South Pacific the force commander there already was making his plans for Phase One, which Washington labeled Operation WATCHTOWER. But, valid as was the Chiefs' of Staff determination to lose no time in launching this first offensive, problems facing Ghormley and Nimitz were so grim that the pseudo code name for the undertaking soon became "Operation Shoestring."

JAPANESE SITUATION

Since Pearl Harbor the Japanese had expanded through East Asia, the Indies, and much of Melanesia to a gigantic line of departure which menaced Australia from the Indian Ocean to the Coral Sea. Lae, Salamaua, and Finschhafen on New Guinea's north coast had been occupied, and a force for the capture of Port Moresby—a New Guinea town just across the north tip of the Coral Sea from Australia's Cape York Peninsula—stood poised at Rabaul in the Bismarcks, a position taken by the Japanese on 23 January 1942.

A month later the Japanese took Bougainville Island in the Northern Solomons, and on 4 May they took a 300-mile step down this island chain to capture Tulagi, which lay between the larger islands of Florida and Guadalcanal. This started the Japanese encirclement of the Coral Sea, a move that was thwarted by Admiral Fletcher in the naval battle that preceded the fight at Midway (see Part V, Chapter 1).

Defeat of their fleet at Midway forced the Japanese to alter many of their ambitious plans, and on 11 July they gave up the idea of taking New Caledonia, Fiji, and

Samoa. But if Admiral Yamamoto realized that the failure of his fleet at Midway spelled the doom of Japanese ambitions in the Pacific, U. S. fighting men were to meet a number of his countrymen who did not get the word, or who were bent on convincing Yamamoto that he was wrong. Rabaul and Solomons positions grew stronger after the Battle of Midway, and reduction of Fortress Rabaul would occupy efforts of the Allied South Pacific forces for nearly two years. Operation WATCHTOWER, which turned out to be the landing against Tulagi and Guadalcanal, was the first Allied step toward Rabaul.

In 1942 the Australian garrison at Tulagi consisted of a few riflemen of the Australian Imperial Force, some members of the Royal Australian Air Force, a member of the Australian Naval Intelligence, the Resident Commissioner, the civil staff, and a few planters and missionaries. Most of these people evacuated the area after a heavy Japanese air raid of 1 May, and the subsequent sighting by coastwatchers of enemy ships en route toward the Southern Solomons. Among those who remained in the Solomon area were the coastwatchers, courageous old island hands who now retired into the bush and hills from which they would observe Japanese movements and report regularly by radio to their intelligence center in Australia.¹¹

The *3d Kure Special Landing Force* made the Tulagi landing from the cruiser-mine layer *Okinoshima* which flew the flag of Rear Admiral Kiyohide Shima. One group of these Japanese "marines"—a machine gun company, two antitank gun

¹¹ For an excellent account of the work of these men see Cdr E. A. Feldt, RAN, *The Coastwatchers* (New York and Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1946), hereinafter cited as *Coastwatchers*.

platoons, and some laborers—occupied Tulagi while a similar task organization from the *3d Kure Force* went ashore on Gavutu, a smaller island nearby. They met no opposition, except that from Admiral Fletcher's planes in the action ancillary to the Battle of the Coral Sea, and defensive installations were set up immediately to protect the base construction and improvement work which soon got underway. The Japanese set up coastwatcher stations on Savo Island at the northwest end of the channel between Florida and Guadalcanal, and on both tips as well as the south coast of Guadalcanal.

Tulagi has an excellent harbor,¹² and initial efforts of the Japanese landing force improved this and developed a seaplane base there. The enemy took no immediate steps to develop airfields, and a full month passed before surveying parties and patrols crossed the 20-mile channel to Guadalcanal where they staked out an air strip site on the plains of the Lunga River. They finished this survey late in June and began to grade a runway early in July.

With a scrapping of the plans to occupy Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia, and with the importance of Rabaul thus increased, Japanese holdings in the Lower Solomons had gained in value. Tulagi with its excellent harbor, and Guadalcanal with its broad plains suitable for airstrips, would be an important outwork to Rabaul. A new offensive likewise could be mounted from the Bismarck-Solomon positions, to erase the Coral Sea and Midway setbacks.

¹² Earl Jellicoe, the British admiral who commanded at Jutland, recommended after a South Pacific inspection trip following World War I that the Tulagi harbor be developed as a major fleet base.

Japan still had her eye on Port Moresby. The troops slated for that occupation already waited at Rabaul, and now a new fleet, the *Eighth*, under Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, was created to help look after this southern end of the Japanese conquest string. This fleet, with the help of aircraft from Rabaul and the Lower Solomons, would protect the ferrying of troops to Buna, and the subsequent overland march of these troops across New Guinea's Owen Stanley Mountains to capture Port Moresby. Thus Australia would be well blocked if not completely isolated; and maybe if the Japanese did not think about the defeat at Midway the sting would just go away and everything would be all right again.¹³

U. S. PREPARATIONS

After reinforcing the Anzac lifeline (see Part II, Chapter 3), the U. S. began edging toward its Solomon Islands target area. Near the end of March some 500 Army troops from Major General Alexander M. Patch's America Division in New Caledonia went up to garrison Efate in the lower New Hebrides. On 29 March the 4th Marine Defense Battalion and Marine Fighter Squadron 212, diverted from their deployment from Hawaii to Tongatabu, also landed on this island. These Marines and Army personnel built an airstrip for the fighter squadron. Naval forces also began to arrive during this time, and in April other elements of Marine Air Group 23, parent organization of Squadron 212, came to the island. The prewar seaplane base at Vila, Efate's larg-

¹³ For an idea of the pains taken by official Japan to hide the facts of the Midway defeat, see the preface of Mitsuo Fuchida in *Battle That Doomed Japan*, xiii-xv.

est town, was improved, and another such base was built in Havannah Harbor on the island's northwest coast.

This was a hazardous and rather unnerving extension of defensive lines for the meager American force of that period. The Japanese were just 700 miles to the north in the Lower Solomons, and this fact gave these New Hebrides islands and waters that same hostile, "creepy" feeling that members of the unsuccessful Wake relief expedition had sensed while on that venture deep into the enemy zone. The Japanese made a few air raids into this area, but the greatest opposition came from the anopheles mosquito.

In the New Hebrides American troops of World War II had their first wholesale encounter with this carrier of malaria, and the field medical units were not prepared to cope with the disease in such proportions. Atabrine tablets were not yet available, and even quinine was in short supply. By the end of April there were 133 cases of malaria among the 947 officers and men of the 4th Defense Battalion, and by the time of the Guadalcanal landing early in August the entire New Hebrides force reported the disease in even greater proportions. Medical units were dispatching requests for "an enormous amount of quinine."¹⁴

In May both General Patch and Admiral Ghormley recommended that a force be sent even farther north, to Espiritu Santo. An airfield there would put the Allied planes 150 miles closer to the Solomons, and the force there would be a protective outwork for Efate until that first offensive started. Admiral Ghormley also recommended that the Ellice Islands, between the Samoan group and the Gilberts, be oc-

cupied as an additional outpost of the communication lines to Australia. This move was postponed, however, and it was not until October that Marines landed at Funafuti in the Ellice group. Espiritu Santo was immediately important to the Solomons operation, however, and on 28 May a force of about 500 Army troops moved from Efate to the larger New Hebrides island farther north. The first attempt of these troops to build an airfield there bogged down in a stretch of swamp and new outbreaks of malaria.

By this time, plans for the WATCHTOWER landings were firming up, and the effort at Espiritu Santo was reinforced so that the airfield would be completed in time. On 15 July a detachment from the 4th Marine Defense Battalion went up to Santo with a heavy antiaircraft battery and an automatic weapons battery. The airfield was completed in time, but the Army troops and Marines were mostly walking cases of malaria by then. However, important islands had been reinforced, new garrisons formed to protect the communication lines, and these displacements toward enemy bases had been accomplished. The time had come to strike back at the Japanese.

PLANS FOR BATTLE

When Admiral Ghormley received the WATCHTOWER warning order on 25 June, the 1st Marine Division, commanded by Major General Alexander Archer Vandegrift, was en route from the United States to Wellington, New Zealand. The advance echelon had arrived on 14 June, and the rear was at sea. It would land on 11 July. Until 26 June when information of the operation reached the division staff, Vandegrift had planned to continue

¹⁴ MedRept, 4th DefBn, March-August 1942.

training his division in New Zealand.¹⁵ The division, the Marine Corps' major unit available for employment on such short notice, was understrength by about one third because of detachment of the reinforced 7th Marines to Samoan duty.

Army troops in the area, originally under Ghormley's command, could provide little more than moral support to the landings. This shoestring venture would not remove the need for garrison forces elsewhere in the South Pacific. Besides, Ghormley lost his direct control of these troops on 1 July when Major General Millard F. Harmon, USA, became Commanding General, South Pacific Area, to head all Army forces in the theater. Even though Harmon would be under Ghormley's command, the admiral at first disliked this command setup. But he later came to regard Harmon as one of the finest administrators and coordinators he had ever met.¹⁶

Admiral Ghormley's job in the South Pacific seemed almost to resemble that of a traffic director more than it did the role of a commander. According to plans, Nimitz would order task force commanders, with their missions already assigned them, to report to Ghormley when they were going to carry out missions in his area. Ghormley then would direct these commanders to execute the missions Nimitz had assigned them, and he could not interfere in these missions except when tasks

were opposed by circumstances of which Nimitz was not aware.¹⁷

To complete the picture of command for WATCHTOWER, Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner arrived from Washington on 18 July and reported to Ghormley as commander of the amphibious force. Ghormley, under Nimitz, was in over-all strategic command, but he would remain at his headquarters in Noumea. Admiral Fletcher would command the joint expeditionary force. But in practice Fletcher confined himself almost completely to providing air cover from his carriers, and this left Turner, in addition to commanding Vandegrift and his division, in charge of almost everything else as well.

This command setup which placed Vandegrift under the Navy's amphibious force commander rankled until nearly the time of the withdrawal of the 1st Marine Division from Guadalcanal fighting. It was not a case of small jealousy about control or any sort of petty peevishness on the part of either Vandegrift or Turner. Rather it was a clash of serious opposing convictions about how such an operation should be conducted. Turner and many other Naval authorities looked upon the landing force as just a detachment from the force afloat, and still connected to the Navy's amphibious force by firm command lines. That was a traditional view from an earlier age.

But this was the beginning of a big new war, and Marines had experience and thinking time enough in amphibious matters to have definite studied opinions about how these intricate over-the-beach operations should be conducted when they reached the proportions which would be

¹⁵ Gen Vandegrift was under the impression that his division would not be called for combat duty prior to early 1943.

¹⁶ Adm R. L. Ghormley personal notes, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Ghormley MS*; Maj J. L. Zimmerman interview with Adm R. L. Ghormley, January 1949.

¹⁷ ComSoPac War Diary, 9May42 (located at NHD).

necessary in the Pacific. Vandegrift, faced with the task of putting these studied opinions and experiments into practice, wanted a clear-cut command right, free from any vestige of divided responsibility shared with the commander afloat. Once firmly established ashore, Marine opinion held, the landing force commander should command his own land operation. His training and position on the battleground made him more qualified for this job than was the amphibious force commander. It took some arguing, and this matter finally had to be taken to the top of military hierarchy, but the Navy eventually saw the point and agreed with it.

Turner's second in command was Rear Admiral V. A. C. Crutchley, RN, whose covering force would include eight cruisers (three Australian and five U. S.) and fifteen destroyers (all U. S.). These ships were to provide naval gunfire support and antiaircraft protection. In all, the naval contingent included three aircraft carriers with a strength of 250 planes; a number of light and heavy cruisers; two new battleships; and the available screening vessels and auxiliary craft. Transports and cargo vessels were at a premium, and would continue so for some time.

In addition to the approximately 250 carrier aircraft, Ghormley could muster only 166 Navy and Marine Corps planes (including two Marine squadrons—VMF-212 and VMO-251), 95 Army planes, and 30 planes from the Royal New Zealand Air Force. These 291 aircraft—all unfortunately based beyond striking range of the target area—were under the command of Rear Admiral John S. McCain whose title was Commander Aircraft South Pacific.

He was instrumental in bringing about the construction of the Espiritu Santo airfield and seeing that it was available for aircraft on 28 July, in spite of all the troubles which befell the force in the New Hebrides.

VMO-251 came in to Noumea on 12 July on board the USS *Heywood*. The outfit barely had time to set up camp at Tontouta and uncrate its aircraft before it got the word to go up to that new field at Santo and back up the landing. On 2 August the unit began to arrive at this northern New Hebrides field, and within nine days Lieutenant Colonel John N. Hart had his squadron installed there with its sixteen F4F-3P long-range photographic planes. Hart still was short his wing tanks for long-range flying, however. These were finally flown out from Pearl Harbor and arrived on 20 August.

MacArthur's contribution to the Guadalcanal operation consisted of about sixteen B-17's which flew reconnaissance over the area west of the 158th meridian east (the boundary between the South and Southwest Pacific Areas for air search) and attempted to put a stopper on the enemy air from Rabaul.

Thus Ghormley could rely only on the services of a small, highly trained striking force of fluctuating but never overwhelming power. He had no assurances of reserve ground troops, although plans were under way to release both the 7th and 8th Marines from their Samoan defense missions,¹⁸ and he had been advised that garrison forces would have to come from the troops already within his area on base de-

¹⁸ Relief for 7th Mar. was to leave the U. S. on 20 July and that for the 8th Mar on 1 September. ComSoPac War Diary, June 1942 (located at NHD).

fense duty.¹⁹ The 1st Base Depot had set up an advance echelon in Wellington on 21 June, and other supply bases were to be established later at Noumea and Espiritu Santo.

The general structure organized to employ these resources against the Japanese was laid down in Nimitz' order to Ghormley of 9 July, and Ghormley's Operation Plan 1-42 of 17 July 1942.²⁰

Ghormley, exercising strategic command, set up his organization in three main groups:

Carrier Forces (Task Force 61.1), commanded by Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes, was composed of elements of three task forces from Nimitz's area—11, 16, and 18. It would include three carriers, *Saratoga*, *Enterprise*, and *Wasp*, the fast new battleship *North Carolina*, five heavy cruisers, one so-called antiaircraft cruiser, and 16 destroyers.

Amphibious Force (Task Force 61.2), commanded by Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, included the Marine landing force carried in 13 attack transports, four destroyer transports, and six cargo ships; a fire support group of one antiaircraft and three heavy cruisers plus six destroyers; a screening group of one light and three heavy cruisers as well as nine

destroyers; and a small mine-sweeping group.

Shore-Based Aircraft (Task Force 63), under Rear Admiral J. S. McCain (ComAirSoPac), included all aircraft in the area except those on carriers.

Complicating this symmetrical structure was the tactical command role played by Vice Admiral Fletcher. He was in overall command of TF 61 which included the forces of Noyes and Turner.

Ghormley called for a rehearsal in the Fiji area and directed that all task force commanders arrange to hold a conference near the rehearsal area. He himself would move from Auckland to Noumea about 1 August in order to comply with his orders to exercise strategic command within the operating area.²¹

By this time the plans and orders were formed, the target selected, the forces organized, and the Navy given leeway to operate without poaching in the territory of the Southwest Pacific. Only the detail of a landing date remained unsettled. Vandegrift pointed out to Ghormley that the late arrival of his second echelon, and a stretch of bad weather, had so complicated his loading problem as to make it impossible to meet the date of 1 August. Ghormley and Nimitz agreed that an additional week was needed, and King consented to postpone the landing until 7 August. King warned, however, that this was the latest date permissible and that every effort should be made to advance it.

ACCUMULATION OF INTELLIGENCE

From an intelligence point of view, the Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings can hardly

¹⁹ Adm King's effort to secure quick release for the assault troops was not successful. The Army's commitments to the European Theater were such that no units were available for such missions. Initially assured that air support and air replacements would be available, King was advised on 27 July by LtGen Joseph C. McNarney, acting Chief of Staff, that commitments in other areas would not permit further air reinforcements of the South Pacific—a dictum which King protested strongly. CominCh memo to CofSA, 1Aug42 (located at NHD).

²⁰ *Ghormley MS*, 54, 58.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

be described as more than a stab in the dark. When General Vandegrift received his initial warning order on 26 June 1942, neither his staff nor the local New Zealand authorities had more than the most general and sketchy knowledge of the objective area or the enemy's strength and disposition, and there was but a month available before the scheduled date of mounting out, 22 July.

As in the case with most tropical backwaters, the charting and hydrographic information was scanty and out of date. Lieutenant Colonel Frank B. Goettge, Intelligence Officer of the 1st Marine Division, therefore set out to locate traders, planters, shipmasters, and a few miners who had visited or lived at Guadalcanal or Tulagi. A number of likely sources resided in Australia, and while his subordinates tabulated the formal data available, Goettge left for Australia on 2 July. He returned to New Zealand on the 13th.

Long after the conclusion of the campaign, it was learned that Colonel Goettge's efforts deserved better success than they had enjoyed. During his hurried trip to Australia, he arranged with the Southwest Pacific Area for maps to be made from a strip of aerial photographs and to be delivered prior to the sortie of the 1st Marine Division. The maps were made, but were not received because of certain oversights and confusion in mounting out the division.

From Buka and Bougainville in the north, the Solomons form a double column of islands streaming southeast between latitudes five and twelve degrees south. Looking northwest toward Bougainville, the large islands on the right are Choiseul, Santa Isabel, and Malaita. In the column to the left are the islands of the New Geor-

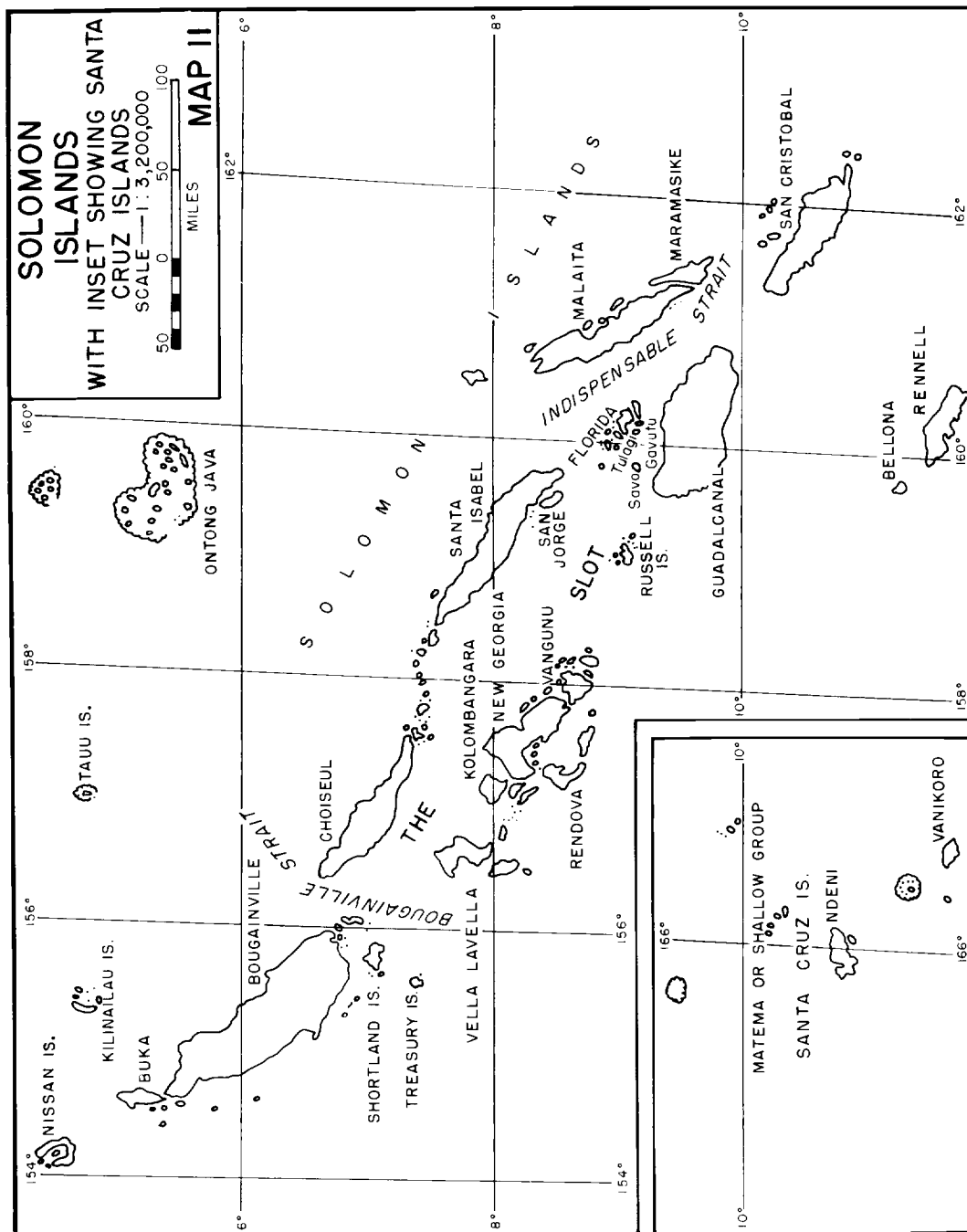
gia group, the Russells, Guadalcanal, and San Cristobal. Buka and Bougainville at outbreak of the war were part of the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea; the remainder of the double chain formed the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. In all, the islands number several hundred, with some 18,600 square miles of land area. (See Map 11)

Florida, the largest island of the Nggela Groan, lies between Malaita and Guadalcanal; and between the northern tips of Guadalcanal and Florida is the small, nearly-conical island of Savo. Indispensable Strait separates Florida from neighboring Malaita to the east, and the twenty-mile-wide strait between Florida and Guadalcanal to the south is known generally as Sealark Channel. (See Map 13, Map Section)

Nestled into the northwest rim of a jagged bight in Florida's south coast lies Tulagi, seat of the British Resident Commissioner. Tulagi Harbor, the water between the two islands, is the best anchorage in the Southern Solomons.

In the middle of Florida's bight, generally east southeast of Tulagi, lie the smaller causeway-connected islands of Gavutu and Tanambogo. Gavutu was the local headquarters of Lever Brothers which operated coconut plantations in the area, and this island, as well as Tanambogo and Tulagi, possessed some docks, jetties, and other developments for shipping, management, and copra processing.

Mostly volcanic in origin and lying within the world's wettest area, the Solomons are jagged, jungle-covered, and steamy with humid tropical heat. Lofty peaks and ridges cross-faulted by volcanic action and dramatic erosion cuts from swift rivers chop the islands into conflict-



ing terrain that became a nightmare for military operations.

Guadalcanal, some 90 miles in length and about 25 miles wide, presents a varied topography ranging from plains and foothills along the north coast to a mountain backbone dropping rapidly to the south coast. Rainfall is extremely heavy, and changes in season are marked only by changes in intensity of precipitation. This, together with an average temperature in the high 80's, results in an unhealthy climate. Malaria, dengue, and other fevers, as well as fungus infections, afflict the population.

Rivers are numerous and from the military point of view may be divided arbitrarily into two classes. The first of these is the long, swift, relatively shallow river that may be forded at numerous points. Generally deep only for a short distance from its mouth, it presents few problems in the matter of crossing. Examples of this type on Guadalcanal are the Tenaru, the Lunga, and the Balesuna. The second type is that of the slow and deep lagoon. Such streams are sometimes short, as in the case of the Ilu River, and some lagoons are merely the delta streams of rivers of considerable size, as in the case of the Matanikau. This type, because of depth and marshy banks, became a military obstacle.

Although such accumulation of data afforded much enlightenment beyond the little previously known, it included corresponding minor misinformation and many aggravating gaps, for detailed information in a form suitable for military operations was mainly lacking.

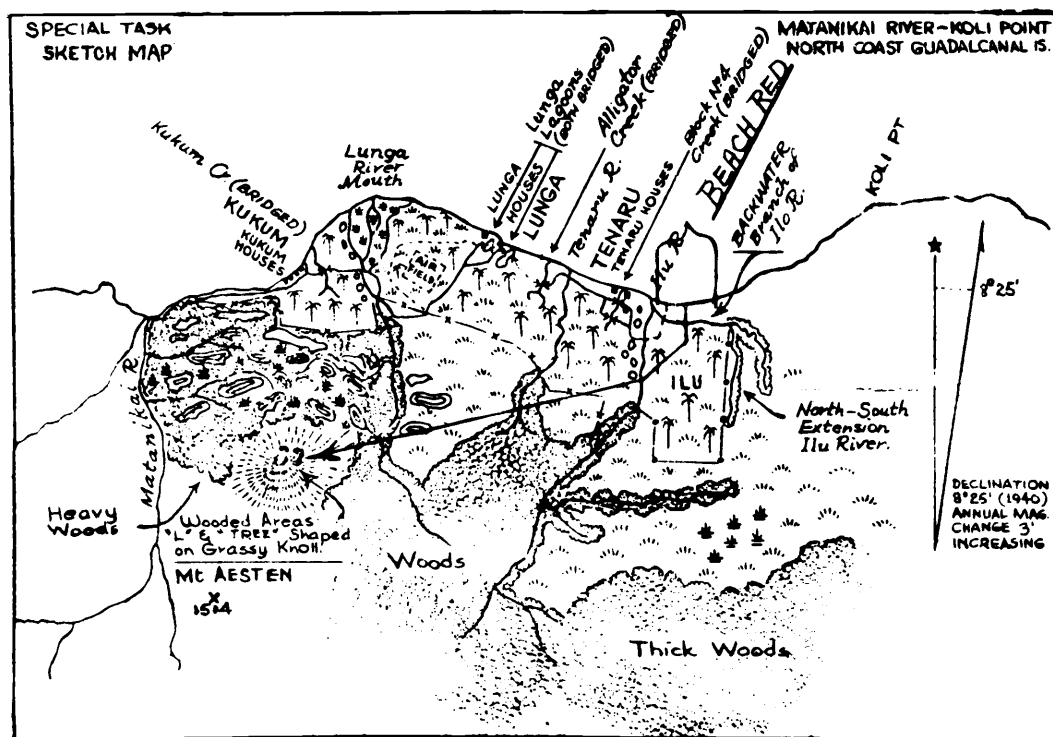
In spite of the number of years which had elapsed since initiation of the systematic economic development of the islands

by the British, not a single accurate or complete map of Guadalcanal or Tulagi existed in the summer of 1942. The hydrographic charts, containing just sufficient data to enable trading schooners to keep from grounding, were little better, although these did locate a few outstanding terrain features of some use for making a landfall or conducting triangulation. Such locations were not always accurate. Mount Austen, for example, was assigned as an early landing objective, but the landing force discovered that instead of being but a few hundred yards away from the beaches, the mountain actually lay several miles across almost impassable jungle.²²

Aerial photographs would have been a profitable source of up-to-date information, but the shortage of long-range aircraft and suitably located bases, and the short period available for planning, combined to restrict availability of aerial photos in the quantity and quality normally considered necessary.

Perhaps the most useful photographic sortie carried out prior to the Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings was that undertaken on 17 July by an Army B-17 aircraft in which Lieutenant Colonel Merrill B. Twining, assistant operations officer of

²²This was the so-called "Grassy Knoll" assigned to the 1st Marines. Guadalcanal residents described it as lying virtually within the perimeter area ultimately occupied and defended by Gen Vandegrift, whereas its true location was six miles to the southwest. This discrepancy, unexplained for years, has given much cause for speculation to historians of the Guadalcanal campaign, some of whom have raised the question whether Mount Austen was really the "Grassy Knoll" which Goettege's informants had in mind. This school of thought suggests that a feature within the described limits which might answer that description would have been the high ground later to become known as Edson's Ridge.



Prepared under the direction of the Commander Combat Team No. 5; 1942. From Special Sketch submitted, and controlled by Map; North Coast of Guadalcanal Island, R.F. 1:95,040; 14 July, 1942.

R.F. 1:95,040 Natural Scale 1:100,643
5,000 Yards
Statute Miles

Cartographic & Reproduction
Unit, Combat Team No. 5
1242

SPECIAL NOTE: This map was reproduced from Special Sketch Map drawn from the information supplied by a man thoroughly familiar with the terrain shown. It is an approximate pictorial representation drawn from this person's memory. It is not to be construed as being an accurate map.

: SYMBOLS :

- | | |
|--|---|
| —o—o— DEEP DITCHES, WITH HOLES | —x—x— FIVE STRAND BARBED WIRE FENCES (GOOD REPAIR). |
| ... GRASS PLAINS (THICK: 4 TO 6 FT. HIGH). | —o— FENCE, (TEN YEAR OLD). |
| SWAMP. —o— KNOLLS. | BRIDGES, 3 TON LIMIT, ONE WAY TRAFFIC. |
| COCONUT PALMS AND GRASS LAND. | KUKUM, LUNGA, TENARU and ILU, are Plantations. |

CRUDE SKETCH MAP used in the planning and early operational phases of the Guadalcanal campaign by units of the 5th Combat Team; it is an adaptation of a map prepared by the D-2 Section and typifies the scarcity of reliable terrain information available to the 1st Marine Division when it left New Zealand.

the 1st Marine Division, and Major William B. McKean, member of the staff of Transport Squadron 26, conducted a personal reconnaissance of the landing areas. They assured General Vandegrift that the Lunga beaches appeared suitable for landing.²³

The coastal map of Guadalcanal finally adopted by the 1st Marine Division (and employed, with such corrections as could later be developed, through the entire campaign) was traced from an aerial strip-map obtained by Colonel Goettge on his mission to Australia. It was reasonably accurate in general outline, but contained no usable indications of ground forms or elevations. The Goettge map was supplemented by aerial photos of Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo Islands, and these constituted the sum of the Marines knowledge of Tulagi and Guadalcanal prior to the landings.²⁴

In formation concerning the enemy's strength, dispositions, and activities was collected by the U.S. planners from coastwatcher reports.²⁵ Strength figures were by no means as definite or convincing as were the factual accounts of the defenses. Various intelligence estimates, prepared during July, gave figures as high as 8,400. Admiral Turner's Operation Plan A3-42,

issued at the Koro Island rehearsals in the Fijis on 30 July, estimated that 1,850 enemy would be found on Tulagi and Gavutu-Tanambogo, and 5,275 on Guadalcanal. 130th figures were high. A count of enemy dead in the Tulagi and Gavutu area placed the number of defenders at about 1,500 (including 600 laborers), while study of positions, interrogation of prisoners, and translation of enemy documents on Guadalcanal proper indicated that about 2,230 troops and laborers had been in the Lunga area at the time of the Marines landing.

Close and determined combat was anticipated with these forces; and on 17 July, Admiral Nimitz notified Admiral King that it would be unsafe to assume that the enemy would not attempt to retake the area to be attacked, and that, if insufficient forces were assigned, the Marines might not, be able to hold on.²⁶

PLANNING AND MOUNTING OUT

For the dual landing operation, General Vandegrift divided his organization into two forces. The units landing on the Florida side of Sealark Channel (**Group Yoke**) were to be commanded by Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, the assistant division commander (ADC), while Vandegrift himself would exercise command over **Group X-Ray** landing at Lunga Point. (See Map 13, Map Section)

It was expected that the Florida-side landings would be more severely contested by the Japanese, and to that landing group the general assigned his best-trained units: the 1st Marine Raider Battalion, com-

²³ HistSec, HQMC interview with Col W. B. McKean, 18Feb48.

²⁴ Two aerial photos, taken on 2 August by a ComAirSoPac R-11 and developed aboard the USS *Enterprise*, were forwarded to Division Headquarters. They showed Tulagi defensive positions in sharp detail, and verified the reports of coastwatchers about the rapidly approaching completion of the airstrip in the Lunga plains.

²⁵ "The invaluable service of the Solomon Islands coastwatching system . . . cannot be too highly commended." *Final Rept*, Phase I, Annex E, 2.

²⁶ CinCPac disp to CominCh, 17Jul42 (located at NHD).

manded by Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. Edson; the 1st Parachute Battalion of Major Robert H. Williams; and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Rosecrans, all with their reinforcing units attached. Edson would be the commander of the Tulagi landing force; Williams the commander at Gavutu-Tanambogo. The Guadalcanal group included Colonel Clifton B. Cates' 1st Marines and Colonel Leroy P. Hunt's 5th Marines (less 2/5), both reinforced, plus the balance of the division special and service troops.²⁷

The Tulagi plan called for the 1st Raider Battalion and 2d Battalion, 5th Marines to land in column on the island's south coast, turn east, and attack down the long axis of the island. This would be followed by 1st Parachute Battalion landings on Gavutu and Tanambogo, and a two-company sweep along Florida Island's coast line fronting Tulagi Bay. (See Map 15, Map Section)

The Guadalcanal scheme envisaged landing the 5th Marines (less 2d Bn) across a beach some few hundred yards east of the Lunga Point area where the Japanese were expected to be concentrated, and there to establish 'a beachhead. The 1st Marines then would come ashore in a column of battalions and pass through this perimeter to take Mount Austen. The

²⁷ At this time, the later-used phrase "regimental combat team" (RCT) had not come into uniform use. This we would currently style a "regimental landing team" (RLT). What Guadalcanal Marines labeled a "combat group" included a rifle regiment with its direct-support artillery battalion, engineers, signal, medical, and other supporting elements. Within the so-called combat groups, similar battalion-sized aggregations were designated combat teams. This usage will be followed throughout this narrative.

primary goal was to establish a beachhead in an area not strongly defended."

To make up for the division's manpower shortage caused by the detached duty of the 7th Marines in Samoa, Admiral King on 27 June had proposed that Vandegrift be allotted the 2d Marines of the 2d Marine Division. Accordingly this unit (reinforced) sailed combat loaded from San Diego on 1 July.²⁹ The regiment would be the landing force reserve.³⁰

While staff planners contemplated a target area nearly as unfamiliar to them as the back side of the moon, other members of the landing force wrestled the monumental chore of preparing for the movement to combat. "Seldom," General Vandegrift said later, "has an operation been begun under more disadvantageous circumstances."³¹

When the decision to land on enemy beaches reached the 1st Marine Division, the command post and the 5th Marine Regiment were in Wellington, New Zealand; the 1st Marines and the 11th Marines, less two of its battalions, were at sea en route to New Zealand; service and special troops were split between the forward and rear echelons; the 2d Regiment was on

²⁸ 1st MarDiv OpOrd T-12, 20Jul42. See Appendix E.

²⁹ Original plans called for this unit to carry out projected landings at Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands. Needless to say, these were never made, although occupation plans for that island, always involving Marine forces, continue to appear in Adm Turner's record until October 1942.

³⁰ "It is most desirable that 2d Marines be reinforced and combat unit loaded and ready upon arrival this area for employment in landing operations as a reinforced regimental combat team." ComSoPac War Diary, 27Jun42 (located at NHD).

³¹ *Final Rpt*, Phase V, 1.

the way from San Diego to the South Pacific; the 1st Raider Battalion was in Samoa, and the 3d Defense Battalion was in Hawaii. Preliminary plans and moves had to assemble these widely scattered units into a fighting force which could make an amphibious landing, one of the most intricate of military maneuvers. From the understanding that it would be the nucleus for the buildup of a force which would be trained for operations which might come late in 1942, the 1st Marine Division had to shift at once into hurried preparations to mount out for action.

Most of the ships transporting units of the division had been loaded organizationally for the voyage to New Zealand, but for the proposed amphibious assault the supplies had to be reshuffled and ships combat loaded so that items first needed in the fighting would be readily at hand in the holds. The reloading and re-embarking of Combat Group A (5th Marines, reinforced) went smoothly, uncomplicated by the necessity for simultaneous unloading and reloading which plagued the rear echelon. The group began embarkation on 2 July and remained on board its transport to await the arrival of the rear echelon.

This second echelon arrived on 11 July, and had eleven days to empty and reload its ships. No troops were disembarked except those who were to remain in New Zealand as rear echelon personnel. All others, who already had been in cramped quarters during the long trip across the Pacific, were put to work in eight-hour shifts, and parties of 300 men were assigned to each ship.³²

³² The passage from the United States to New Zealand had been particularly trying for the officers and men on board the *Ericsson*, a com-

Aotea Quay at Wellington was the scene of this squaring away. It was inadequate in all ways save that it could accommodate five ships at a time. Labor difficulties with the highly unionized stevedores resulted in the entire task being undertaken and carried through by Marines. Because of security regulations, no appeal to patriotism could be made to the regular dock workers since care was taken to have civilians believe that all the flurry was merely preparation for a training exercise. Dockside equipment was meager, and there was no shelter close at hand.

As the gear began to be juggled from ship to dock and back again, a cold, wet "southerly" settled down to lash New Zealand. But in spite of the weather, work had to continue around the clock. Carton-packed food and other supplies "deteriorated rapidly," the division later reported by way of an understatement, and the morale of troops followed the direction of the down-slanting rain.

On the dock, cereal, sugar, and other rations mushed together with globs of brown pulp that once had been cardboard boxes. A great number of wet cartons that were rushed to the hopeful safety of wool warehouses later gave way under the weight of stacking. Lieutenant Colonel Randolph McC. Pate and his logistics section had a herculean task in managing this unloading

mercial ship under charter. Lack of proper food, and use of oil substitutes for shortening, resulted in loss of weight of as high as 23 pounds per man. Two meals only were served during the greater part of the passage, and one of these often consisted of soup or soup and bread. Medical officers estimated the daily calorie content of meals at less than 1,500. The ship's personnel enjoyed a full and well balanced diet during the same period. *Ibid.*, Phase I, Annex M. 1.

and reloading. Transport quartermasters of the various ships supervised work on board while a relay of officers from the division took charge of the eight-hour shifts dockside. The New Zealand Army furnished 30 flatbed lorries and 18 ten-wheelers to transfer fuel, small-arms ammunition and explosives to dumps several miles away.

There was not enough hold space for all the division motor transport. Most of the quarter- and one-ton trucks were put on board, but 75 percent of the heavier rolling stock was set aside to stay with the rear echelon that would be left behind when the division sailed for the Solomons.

Engineers loaded what little dirt-moving equipment they owned, but it was so meager that they hoped the Japanese would have most of the airfield built by the time it was captured. The engineer battalion also loaded bridging material, demolitions, and all available water supply equipment. No major construction was contemplated in early phases of the operation, however, and equipment and supplies for such work were not taken.

With the D-4 or an assistant in constant touch with the dockmaster, order began to appear from the chaos of strewn gear, swelling cereal, wilting cardboard cartons, and frayed tempers. But there were still serious problems. Supplies and equipment piled on docks often made it difficult for trucks to negotiate the narrow passages to reach all areas of the stacked gear, and during this mounting out certain modifications of the logistical plan became necessary. As finally loaded, the Marines carried 60 days supplies, 10 units of fire for all weapons, the minimum individual baggage actually required to live and fight, and less than half the organic motor transport authorized.

Regardless of the difficulties, however, the force sailed as scheduled at 0900 on 22 July, under escort of cruisers of Admiral Turner's Task Force 62.³³ General Vandegrift, despite his request for a vessel better suited in communications and accommodations, had been directed to embark his command post in the USS *McCawley*.

REHEARSALS AND MOVEMENT TO THE OBJECTIVE

In accordance with orders received from Nimitz on 1 July,³⁴ Ghormley had directed that all forces involved in the assault make rendezvous at a position south of Fiji, out of sight of land so that there would be no chance of observation by enemy agents and no chance that an inadvertent tip-off would be made by friendly observers.³⁵ At that point there would be a conference between the commanding officers who had not as yet been able to discuss in person the various aspects of the operation.

The components of the assault force not previously in New Zealand with the division were converging upon the rendezvous point from many directions. Colonel John M. Arthur's 2d Marines (reinforced), embarked in the *Crescent City*, *President Adams*, *President Hayes*, *President Jackson*, and *Alhena*, steamed south under escort of the carrier *Wasp* and a destroyer

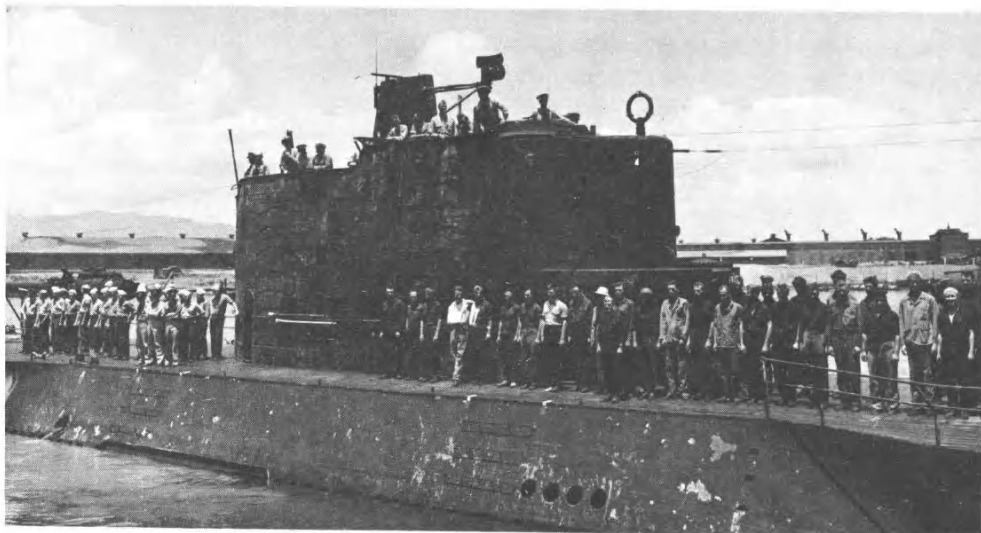
³³ Adm Turner assumed the title of Commander, Amphibious Force South Pacific on his arrival in the South Pacific on 24 July.

³⁴ CinCPac OpOrd 34-42, cited in CinCPac War Diary, July 1942. By terms of this order also, Fletcher, CTF 11, had been ordered to assume command of the combined task forces at the rendezvous, and Ghormley had been put in command of the operation.

³⁵ *Ghormley MS*, 64.



EQUIPMENT FOR THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION, including tanks and amphibian tractors, is unloaded in New Zealand preparatory to the Guadalcanal operation. (USN 11526)



MARINE RAIDERS and the crew of the submarine Argonaut line the deck of the vessel as it returns to Pearl Harbor after the Makin Island raid. (USN 13859)

screen.³⁶ The 1st Raider Battalion, in the four destroyer transports of Transport Division 12, had been picked up at Noumea.

The 3d Defense Battalion (Colonel Robert H. Pepper) on board the USS *Betelgeuse* and *Zeilin* was en route from Pearl Harbor where it had been stationed since the outbreak of the war. It would meet the remainder of the force on 2 August. The Carrier Force, built around the *Saratoga* and the *Enterprise*, with Fletcher flying his flag in the former, likewise was on its way from Pearl Harbor. Rendezvous was made as planned, at 1400 on 26 July, some 400 miles south of Fiji. The conference convened at once on board the *Saratoga*. Ghormley, unable to attend, was represented by his Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan and his Communications Officer, Lieutenant Commander L. M. LeHardy.

The conference pointed up several serious problems. General Vandegrift learned he would not have adequate air and surface support for the completion of the unloading phase of the operation. Fletcher wanted to retire within two days after the landing, and this meant that transport shipping would have to clear out within an unreasonably short period. The Marine general also learned that the 2d Marines, counted as his reserve, actually would be used for the proposed operation at Ndeni in the Santa Cruz islands. Admiral Callaghan reported Fletcher's retirement plans to Ghormley: "This sounds too sanguine to me," Callaghan reported, "but they believe it can be done. . . . AKs [cargo ships] may not be unloaded for

three or four days."³⁷ Ghormley, too, believed that the ships could not be pulled out that soon.

Landing rehearsals at the island of Koro in the Fijis were conducted from 28 through 30 July, but Vandegrift labeled them a waste of time and effort. "A complete bust," he observed later.³⁸ Necessity for conserving landing craft made it impossible to conduct the practice landings in a realistic way, although the men involved were given additional training in debarkation,³⁹ and attack force ships were able to practice their gunfire support.

On 31 July, as night was falling, the ships weighed anchor and departed from Koro. The carrier task force proceeded north and west while the transports and their screen plodded steadily toward the Solomons. Almost 19,000 Marines were embarked in the 19 transports and four destroyer-transports.⁴⁰

All circumstances favored the advancing convoy. Weather conditions during the final two days were extremely favorable: sky topped by a low ceiling and winds gusty with intermittent rain squalls. There was no sign of enemy aircraft or submarines, and no indication that the approach was observed. In fact, enemy

³⁷ Ghormley MS, 67.

³⁸ Statement at Princeton, N. J., 12Mar48.

³⁹ Gen Vandegrift noted at the time that the precious landing craft were not in the best of condition in any event—12 of them were inoperative on one ship alone. Gen A. A. Vandegrift ltr to CMC, 4Feb49.

⁴⁰ A seemingly irreconcilable discrepancy of figures between those of the Amphibious Force, South Pacific, and the 1st Marine Division prevents a wholly accurate statement as to the number of troops embarked then or landed subsequently. The amphibious force lists a figure of 18,722, while the division records list, variously, 19,546 or 19,105.

³⁶ The regiment had been on board since 1 June, lying in the harbor of San Diego.

patrol planes were grounded at Rabaul on 5 and 6 August because of bad weather.⁴¹

The convoy headed generally west from Fiji and well to the south of the Solomons chain. The course gradually shifted to the northward, and the night of 6–7 August found the entire group of ships due west of the western extremity of Guadalcanal.

Task Force 62, commanded by Admiral Turner, was divided into two Transport Groups. Transport Group X-Ray (62.1) commanded by Captain Lawrence F. Reifsnider, with the Guadalcanal forces embarked, consisted of four subgroups, as follows:

Transdiv A: *Fuller, American Legion, Bellatrix.*

Transdiv B: *McCawley, Barnett, Elliot, Libra.*

Transdiv C: *Hunter Liggett, Alchiba, Fomalhaut, Betelgeuse.*

Transdiv D: *Crescent City, President Hayes, President Adams, Alhena.*

Transport Group Yoke (62.2) commanded by Captain George B. Ashe, and carrying the assault troops for the Tulagi landing, consisted of the following subgroups:

Transdiv E: *Neville, Zeilin, Heywood, President Jackson.*

Transdiv 12: *Calhoun, Gregory, Little, McKean.* (the destroyer transport group).⁴²

At 0310, 7 August, the force was directly west of Cape Esperance with an interval of six miles between groups and a speed of 12 knots. Transport Group X-Ray steamed in two parallel columns of eight

and seven ships each with a distance of 750 yards between ships and an interval of 1,000 yards between columns. The rugged outline of the Guadalcanal hills was just visible to starboard when the course was shifted to 040°, and a few minutes later the two groups separated for the completion of their missions. X-Ray, shifting still further to starboard, settled on course 075°, which took it along the Guadalcanal coast, while Yoke, on course 058°, crossed outside Savo Island, toward Florida. The final approach to the transport area was made without incident, and there was no sound until, at 0614, the supporting ships opened fire on the island.⁴³

There are some indications that the Guadalcanal operation on D-Day morning was something of a minor Pearl Harbor in reverse for the Japanese. A recent study of Japanese wartime messages indicates the enemy was aware that a U. S. force had sortied from Hawaii. Warnings were issued to Central Pacific outposts; Rabaul and points south were to be notified for information only. Commander of the Japanese *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* (Marshall-Gilbert-Wake area) relayed his warning message south the next morning—at 0430 on 7 August. It was too late. Less than an hour later he received Tulagi's report that the U. S. striking force had been sighted in Sealark Channel at 0425.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Cdr J. Shaw ltr to Maj J. L. Zimmerman, February 1949.

⁴² CTF 62 OPlan A3-42, 30Jul42.

⁴³ CTG 62.1 ActRept 7-9Aug42, 3.

⁴⁴ Capt. E. T. Layton, USN, ltr to HistBr, G-3, HQMC, June 1955.

Guadalcanal, 7–9 August 1942

THE LANDING

When Task Groups X-Ray and Yoke separated northwest of Cape Esperance at 0240, the former group made for the Red Beach transport area off Guadalcanal in a double column at 12 knots. No enemy activity was observed, and the preliminary naval bombardment of the coastal area, which began at 0613, aroused no response. The X-Ray shipping reached its transport area at 0645 and began to lower the landing craft. Across the channel, Group Yoke likewise arrived at its assigned area off Tulagi without incident at 0630 and straightaway got the word from Captain Ashe that H-hour would be 0800. The units slated for Florida Island would hit their beaches first, as will be described in the next chapter.

The division's command post in the *McCawley* broke radio silence at 0519, and eight minutes later General Vandegrift set the H-hour for his side of the landing at 0910. The bombardment ships worked through their fire plans, and then as news of the successful landings on Florida and Tulagi reached Vandegrift, the first waves of assault troops moved toward the beach. (See Map 14, Map Section)

Three planes from the *Astoria* flew liaison missions in the Guadalcanal area while three from the *Vincennes* performed the same duty above Tulagi. An additional three aircraft, from the *Quincy*, were available for artillery spotting over Guadalcanal. During the ship to shore phase,

these aircraft marked the beach flanks with smoke to assist naval gunfire and to guide the landing boats. Vandegrift and his division air officer held this use to be unwarranted and unnecessary.

But Admiral Turner considered it necessary to "accurately mark the extremities of the landing beaches" as directed by the operation order, and he marked them for twenty minutes. The planes made eight runs at extremely low altitudes, four runs on each beach extremity. Vandegrift pointed out that this would result in a serious if not complete loss of planes if the beaches were defended—this loss at a time when aircraft are critically needed as "eyes" to gain information about the progress of a landing.

Actually the liaison planes over Guadalcanal's random clouds and splotchy jungle furnished Vandegrift precious little information. It was not the fault of the pilots, however, since there was very little to see anyway. In the tense period of this first landing on a hostile beach, the sins were more often those of commission rather than omission. One pilot reported "many enemy troops" only to admit, under questioning for more explicit information, that his "troops" were, in fact, cows.

Other than the cows there still were no signs of activity around Lunga at 0859, 11 minutes before H-hour, when an observation plane from the *Astoria* reported that no Japanese could be seen in that area. But 15 minutes later the same pilot spotted some trucks moving on the Lunga



THE ORIGINAL HENDERSON FIELD, target of the 1st Marine Division's assault at Guadalcanal, as it appeared shortly after its capture. (USMC 108547)



TRANSPORTS AND CARGO SHIPS STAND OFFSHORE as vitally needed supplies for the 1st Marine Division are manhandled by members of the Shore Party. (USMC 51369)

airfield several thousand yards west of the landing beach.

Meanwhile the 5th Marines (less 2d Battalion) had crossed its line of departure and moved into the 5,000-yard approach to the beach. Naval gunfire lifted inland as the craft neared the shore, and minutes later, at 0910, the assault wave hit the beach on a 1,600 yard front and pushed into the sparse jungle growth beyond. With Lieutenant Colonel William E. Maxwell's 1st Battalion on the right (west) and Lieutenant Colonel Frederick C. Biebush's 3d Battalion on the left, the beachhead expanded rapidly against no opposition. A perimeter some 600 yards inland soon established a hasty defense. The line anchored on the west at the Tenaru River, on the east at the Tenavatu River, and reached on the south an east-west branch of the Tenaru.¹

Regimental headquarters came ashore at 0938 to be followed two minutes later by heavy weapons troops. Landing of the reserve regiment, Colonel Cates' reinforced 1st Marines, already was underway. Beginning at 0930, this regiment came ashore in a column of battalions with 2/1 in the van followed by the 3d and 1st Battalions in that order.

Artillery came next, and the units partially bogged down. The howitzer men admitted later that they had taken too much gear ashore with them. Prime movers for the 105mm howitzers did not get ashore initially because there were not enough ramp boats for this work, and one-ton trucks proved too light to handle the

field pieces. Needed were two-and-a-half-ton six by sixes and ramp boats to put these vehicles on the beach simultaneously with the howitzers. Such prime movers were authorized, but so were a lot of other things the Marines did not have.

In spite of these troubles, the artillery units reached their assigned firing positions by making overland prime movers out of amphibian tractors that began to wallow ashore heavy with cargo.² Once in position, however, the gunners found the amphibian was a creature of mixed virtues: tracked vehicles tore up the communications wire, creating early the pattern of combat events that became too familiar to plagued wiremen.

Meanwhile the light 75mm pack howitzers had made it ashore with little trouble, and the advance toward the airfield got underway. At 1115 the 1st Marines moved through the hasty perimeter of the 5th Marines and struck out southwest toward Mount Austen, the "Grassy Knoll." Cates put his regiment across the Tenaru at an engineer bridge supported by an amphibian tractor, and the 1st Marines progressed slowly into the thickening jungle. Behind, to extend the beachhead, 1/5 crossed the mouth of the Tenaru at 1330 and moved toward the Ilu. Neither advance encountered enemy resistance.

¹ In early maps the names of the Tenaru and Ilu Rivers were incorrectly transposed. In this account the names will be applied to the correct rivers, but the name, "Battle of the Tenaru," will be retained to identify the August battle at the mouth of the Ilu.

² The amphibian, later to be used to transport assault troops from ship to shore, started its war career here in a modest manner. Its "usefulness exceeded all expectations," the Marines reported, but at the time nobody considered the strange craft capable of much more than amphibious drayage. The following day (D-plus one) on Gavutu an amphibian would create rather dramatic history by attacking a hostile cave, but such bravery was never recommended, even later when these craft entered the heyday of their more important role.

Colonel Cates realized almost at once that it would be impossible to reach Mount Austen as his day's objective. The so-called Grassy Knoll, visible from the ships, could not be seen from the beach. It commanded the Lunga area, but it lay much farther inland than reports of former planters and schooner pilots had indicated.

Under heavy packs, sometimes excessive loads of ammunition, and with insufficient water and salt tablets,³ the 1st Marines by late afternoon had struggled but a mile when General Vandegrift ordered the regiment to halt, reorient, and establish internal contact. The men dug in a perimeter in the jungle, some 3,500 yards south of the Ilu's mouth where 1/5 had ended its advance, to set up for the night.

In spite of the breakneck pace with which the shoestring operation had mounted out and thrown itself in the path of the Japanese advance along the Solomon chain, the landing was a success. Although the lack of opposition (on the Guadalcanal side only) gave it somewhat the characteristics of a training maneuver, the need for additional training that Vandegrift had hoped to give his men in New Zealand became apparent. The general criticized the "uniform and lamentable"⁴ failure of all units to patrol properly their fronts and flanks.

Logistical difficulties were worse. Movement of supplies from the landing craft to the beaches and then to supply dumps soon began to snarl. Admiral Turner blamed this on the Marines' failure to understand the number of troops required for such

work, failure to extend the beach limits promptly enough and, to some extent, a lack of control and direction over troops in the beach area. But the trouble and its causes were neither as clear-cut nor as damning as that. Marine planners had foreseen a dangerous shortage of man power at this critical point, but under the uncertain circumstances on this hostile beach they felt they could allot no more men to the job than the 500 from Colonel George R. Rowan's 1st Pioneer Battalion. Vandegrift did not want working parties to cut the strength of his fighting units to a level which might risk getting them defeated.

Hindsight now makes it clear that the supplies mounting up as a juicy beach target jeopardized the operation more than a call for additional working parties would have done. There were hardly enough Japanese fighting men ashore on the island to bother the Vandegrift force, but if enemy planes from Rabaul had concentrated on hitting the congested beach they would have played havoc with this whole venture. Marines were aware of this risk, but they also expected to run into a sizable Japanese force somewhere in the thickening jungle. The people in the shore party would just have to work harder.

Sailors joined the pioneers but the beach remained cluttered in spite of this help. Needed, division officers reported later, were "additional personnel in the proportion of at least 100 men for each vessel discharging cargo across the beach."⁵ It was not that this problem had never been thought out and planned for in fleet exercises over the years. It was just that this was "Operation Shoestring." The situation became so bad during the night of 7-8

³ Medically speaking, the weight of individual equipment was excessive in most cases for men who had been cooped so long in steamy holds of ships and fed short, and sometimes inferior, rations. *Final Rept*, Phase II, 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Phase V, 7.

August that the landing force had to ask the ships to stop unloading. There had been air attacks that afternoon, and more were expected on the 8th. The exhausted workers needed time to clear the beaches and spread out the gear so it would be less of a target.

Fortunately the air attacks during the day had concentrated on the shipping. At about 1100 on the 7th a coastwatcher in the Upper Solomons passed the word on the watchers' network that about 18 bombers were on the way to Guadalcanal. This warning was relayed to Guadalcanal through Brisbane within 25 minutes, and the planes arrived at 1320. The destroyer *Mugford* suffered 20 casualties under a 250-pound bomb hit, but it was the only ship struck by the attack. Antiaircraft fire downed two of the twin-engined Type 97's. Later in the afternoon, at about 1500, 10 Aichi dive bombers had no luck at all, but fire from the ships scratched another two Japanese planes. Other planes from both these attacks were downed by Fletcher's carrier aircraft.

At 2200 on 7 August, Vandegrift issued his attack order for the following day. Plans had been changed. Since Mount Austen was out of reach, and because only 10,000 troops were available in the Lunga area, he ordered an occupation of the airfield and establishment of a defensive line along the Lunga River. Positions east and southeast of Red Beach would be maintained temporarily to protect supplies and unloading until shore party activities could be established within the new perimeter.

At 0930 on 8 August the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines and Company A, 1st Tank Battalion crossed the Ilu River at its mouth and advanced cautiously west-

ward along the beach toward the Lunga. At the same time the 1st Marines moved from its night perimeter. Contact between units within this regiment was faulty, but by nightfall Lieutenant Colonel Lenard B. Cresswell's 1st Battalion had overrun the field and reached the Lunga. The other two battalions, slowed by difficult terrain, advanced about 500 yards an hour and bivouacked for the night south of the airfield.

Along the beach, 1/5 and the tanks met the first scattered resistance as they passed through the area in which the main Japanese force had been located. A few prisoners were taken, and intelligence indicated that the enemy was in no position to attack the superior Marine landing force. Continued lack of resistance elsewhere seemed to confirm this, and at 1430 the Marines contracted their front, crossed the Lunga by a bridge immediately north of the airfield, and advanced more rapidly toward the Kukum River, a stream in the western fan of the Lunga delta.

With Company D leading, this advance came upon the main Japanese encampment area at 1500. The enemy force, obviously smaller than anticipated, had retreated in evident haste and confusion. Large quantities of undamaged food, ammunition, engineering material, electrical gear, and radio equipment had been left behind. Although some improperly indoctrinated Marines began to destroy this gear, that tendency soon was halted, and in the next few weeks these men would lose their contempt for this windfall of material.

Except for token resistance from some of the straggling Japanese attempting to flee west, air action constituted the enemy's only effort to hamper the Marines. At about 1100 Coastwatcher Cecil John Ma-

son, Pilot Officer, RAAF, warned from his Bougainville hide-out that a large number of planes were winging toward Guadalcanal. In another hour some 40 twin-engine torpedo planes appeared over the area to find the task force, alerted by the warning, maneuvering at top speed while employing evasive tactics.

A torpedo sent the destroyer *Jarris* limping southeast for the New Hebrides. She was sunk next day by an enemy air attack. The transport *Elliott*, set afire when an enemy plane crashed aboard, had to be beached and destroyed by her sister ships. Survivors went on board the *Hunter Liggett*.

Ship antiaircraft fire and fighter planes from Admiral Noyes' carriers shot down 12 Japanese planes, and shore-based antiaircraft accounted for two more. Still others were splashed by carrier-based fighters west of the transport area. A total of seven American planes were lost.⁶

THE JAPANESE RETALIATE

These early attacks hampered Marine operations and unloading, but the beachhead continued to grow. The Japanese had no intentions of giving up their positions in the Southern Solomons without a fierce fight, however, and early on 8 August a task force of five heavy and two light cruisers and a destroyer made ready to strike American shipping in Sealark Channel.

After rendezvousing at St. George's Channel off Rabaul, this force steamed south along Bougainville's east coast until it sighted an Allied patrol plane observing its course. Reversing, the ships made

back up the island coast until the plane departed. Then turning again, they sailed between Bougainville and Choiseul northeast of the Shortlands and set course down "The Slot" toward Guadalcanal.

Word of this approaching force reached Admiral Turner at 1800, and, when Admiral Fletcher notified him shortly thereafter that the carrier force was to be withdrawn, Turner called Vandegrift to the flagship *McCawley* and informed the general that, deprived of carrier protection, the transports must leave at 0600 the next day.

As early as 2 August Admiral Ghormley had known of Fletcher's intentions to retire the carriers before D-Day plus three.⁷ At 1807 on 8 August Fletcher cited fuel shortage and plane losses that had reduced his fighter craft from 99 to 78 and again requested permission to withdraw until sufficient land-based aircraft and fuel were available to support shipping.⁸ It seems that Ghormley had not really expected this problem to come up, in spite of Fletcher's announcement about this matter at the Fiji rehearsals. But now that Fletcher was making the request, Ghormley gave his approval. Ghormley explained later:

When Fletcher, the man on the spot, informed me he had to withdraw for fuel, I approved. He knew the situation in detail; I did not. This resulted in my directing Turner to withdraw his surface forces to prevent their destruction. I was without detailed information as to Turner's situation, but I knew that his forces had landed and that our major problem would become one of giving every support possible to Vandegrift.⁹

⁷ ComSoPac War Diary, 2Aug42 (located at NHD).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9Aug42. For a detailed discussion of Adm Fletcher's withdrawal of his carriers see also *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 27-28, 117.

⁹ *Ghormley MS*, 93.

⁶ CinCPac, "Preliminary Report, Solomon Islands Operation," August 1942, 4.

Vandegrift held that retirement of the ships would leave him in a "most alarming" position.¹⁰ Division plans assumed the ships would remain in the target area four days, and even then all available supplies would prove scanty enough, such was the haste with which the assault mounted out with less than the normal minimum in basic allowances. But a withdrawal early on 9 August would take much of the supplies and equipment away in the holds of ships and leave beach dumps in a state of chaos. The "shoestring" of this first Allied offensive seemed to be pulling apart. This was the first of the operation's many dark hours. (See Map 14, Map Section)

While Vandegrift conferred with Turner, the Japanese ships, elements of the enemy's *Eighth Fleet*, approached Savo Island undetected by destroyers *Ralph Talbot* and *Blue* on picket duty northwest of that small island. They slipped past these ships toward the two Allied cruisers, HMAS *Canberra* and the USS *Chicago*, and destroyers USS *Bagley* and *Patterson* which patrolled the waters between Savo and Cape Esperance. Farther north cruisers USS *Vincennes*, *Astoria*, and *Quincy* and destroyers *Helm* and *Wilson* patrolled between Savo and Florida. Down the channel two cruisers with screening destroyers covered the transports.

With seaplanes up from his cruisers to scout for the Allied ships, *Eighth Fleet* Commander Rear Admiral Gunichi Mikawa steamed southeast until he sighted his enemy at about the same time Allied ships in Sealark Channel received reports of one or more unidentified planes. But Admiral Mikawa's surface force still was undetected at 2313 when these reports

came in. Admiral Turner had estimated that the Japanese ships would hole up in Rekata Bay on Santa Isabel Island and strike at the amphibious force with torpedo-carrying floatplanes.

At 0316 Mikawa ordered independent firing, and torpedoes leaped from their tubes two minutes later. Japanese floatplanes illuminated briefly. The *Canberra* caught two torpedoes in her starboard side, the *Chicago* lost part of her bow, and then the Japanese turned toward the Allied ships between Savo and Florida.

The resulting melee was one of the worst defeats ever suffered by the U. S. Navy. The *Vincennes* and the *Quincy* were lost; the Australian *Canberra* burned all night and had to be abandoned and sunk; destroyer *Ralph Talbot* was damaged, and *Astoria* went down at noon the next day. Fortunately Mikawa retired without pressing his advantage in an attack on the amphibious shipping farther down the channel, and Admiral Turner, delaying his departure, ordered unloading to continue. Late in the afternoon the transports got underway for Noumea, leaving the Marines on their own with four units of fire and 37 days' supply of food.

Even when loaded in Wellington the level of supplies and ammunition had been considered slim. That original loading of 60 days' supplies and 10 units of fire was respectively 33 and 50 per cent below the 90-day and 20-unit levels then considered normal for operations of this kind.¹¹ Now the ships had taken part of these loads

¹⁰ *Final Rept*, Phase II, 13.

¹¹ Division staff officers admitted later that supplies for 60 days represented more gear than their slim fighting outfit could handle logistically at the beach. They recommended that levels should be pegged at 30 days for general supplies, 50 days for rations. The lower level

away, leaving a most inadequate fraction behind. And with air support so sketchy, there was no way to know when the transports could come back again. The stacks of captured Japanese rations began to gain in importance if not in palatability.

According to the war diary of the Commander, Task Force 62, the following troops were left in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area when the transports and supply ships withdrew:

At Guadalcanal:

- Division Headquarters Company (less detachments)
- Division Signal Company (less detachments)
- 5th Marines (less 2d Battalion)
- 1st Marines
- 11th Marines (less Battery E, 1st and 4th Battalions)
- 1st Tank Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Engineer Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Pioneer Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Service Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Medical Battalion (less detachments)
- 1st Military Police Company
- 2d Platoon, 1st Scout Company
- Units, 3d Defense Battalion
- Local Naval Defense Force
- Total on Guadalcanal, about 10,000*

At Tulagi:

- 1st Raider Battalion
- 1st Parachute Battalion
- 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (2d Platoon, Company A, 1st Pioneers attached)
- 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions, 2d Marines
- Batteries H and I, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines
- Detachment, Division Headquarters Company
- Detachment, 2d Signal Company
- 3d Defense Battalion (less detachments)
- Company A, 1st Medical Battalion
- Company A, 2d Engineer Battalion (2d Platoon, Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion attached)
- Company C, 2d Tank Battalion

of 10 units of fire was just right, they added; no attempt should be made to carry 20 units into future landings. *Final Rept.*, Phase II, 17.

- Company A, 2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion (2d Platoon, Company A, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion attached)
- Company D, 2d Medical Battalion
- Company A, 2d Pioneer Battalion (2d Platoon, Company A, 1st Pioneer Battalion attached)
- Battery E, 11th Marines
- Company C, 2d Service Battalion
- Local Naval Defense Force
- Total on Tulagi, 6,075*
- Total personnel left in area, about 16,075*

The 2d Marines under Colonel John M. Arthur had formed the division reserve and was originally slated for the occupation of Ndeni, but all its battalions now were in action in the Tulagi area. The regimental headquarters remained afloat, however, as did working parties from all companies, most of the Headquarters and Service Company, Regimental Weapons Company, administrative units from the various battalions, and G and Headquarters and Service Batteries of 3/10.

The sudden withdrawal of the transports carried these units, which totaled about 1,400 officers and men, back to Espiritu Santo where they were used to "reinforce the garrison there," according to the reports of Admiral Turner. On 14 August, Turner ordered Colonel Arthur to report for duty with the Commanding General, Espiritu Santo. But a few days later Colonel Arthur and a small number of his officers and men got back up to Tulagi.¹²

There seemed no question in Turner's mind about his unrestricted claim of "possession" of the Marines in his area. If his handling of Colonel Arthur was a rather ungenerous bypass of General Vandegrift's command territory, the admiral's plan for those Marines who remained at Espiritu Santo was an even

¹² CTF 62 War Diary, September and October 1942.

more glaring example of his theory of personal command possession. He ordered those "idle" 2d Marines to form a "2d Provisional Raider Battalion." Then he wrote to Admiral Ghormley recommending an overhaul of all Marine regiments in the Amphibious Force, South Pacific. All regiments then would contain raider battalions which could be sent out on special missions. Turner said he did not think Marine regiments would be suited to operations in the Pacific. "The employment of a division seems less likely," the admiral added. He would use raider battalions like building blocks, and fit the landing force to the special problem. Obviously, he expected the Pacific war to be small and tidy.

Admiral Ghormley answered that Turner ought to hold up such reorganization until he found out what the Commandant of the Marine Corps thought of all this. Admiral Ghormley then sent this letter and his endorsement to the Commandant via Admiral Nimitz at Pearl Harbor. Nimitz agreed with Ghormley, and he stressed that "extemporized organ-

ization of Marine Forces should be made only in case of dire necessity." Nimitz then forwarded this correspondence on to Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb, Marine Commandant.

General Holcomb responded to Nimitz that the latter's objections had surely stopped Turner's plan without the need for the Commandant to add other objections, but Holcomb noted "with regret" that Turner had not seen fit to ask General Vandegrift about this plan to reorganize his troops.

This reaction from Nimitz, and the arrival at about that time in the New Hebrides of the "authentic" 2d Raider Battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, caused Turner to halt his plan to turn all Amphibious Force Marines into raiders. But it took the admiral much longer than this to abandon his theory that these Marines were direct "possessions" of his.¹³

¹³ ComPhibForSoPac ltr to ComSoPacFor, 29Aug42; ComSoPacFor ltr to CinCPOA, 6Sep42; CinCPOA ltr to CMC, 24Sep42; CMC ltr to CinCPOA, 30Oct42.

Tulagi and Gavutu-Tanambogo

TULAGI: THE FIRST DAY

After Task Group Yoke separated from the larger body of ships at 0240 on D-Day, its approach to Tulagi was accomplished without incident. All elements of the group arrived in position at about 0630¹ and made ready for the landing.

As the ships approached the transport area, 15 fighters and 15 dive bombers from *Wasp* strafed and bombed the target area,² setting fire to seaplanes that were caught in the harbor.³ (See Map 15, Map Section)

Five-inch naval gunfire from the destroyer *Monssen*, opened up at a promontory of Florida Island, west of Tulagi, and 60 rounds were expended on the target between 0727 and 0732. In the meantime, both the *Buchanan* and *San Juan* (an antiaircraft cruiser) pumped 100 rounds each into nearby targets. *Buchanan* concentrated on a point of land east of Halletta, on Florida, while the *San Juan* blasted

a small island south of the same point of land.⁴

At 0740, 20 minutes before H-hour, Company B (reinforced) of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, under command of Captain Edward J. Crane, landed on Florida near Halletta to protect the left flank of the Tulagi Force. The landing was unopposed, although enemy troops had been reported in position there on 25 July.⁵ Crane, his company reinforced by the 4th platoon of Company D and 21 men from Headquarters Company, reached his objective within 40 minutes. The 252 officers and men went ashore in eight landing boats and were guided to their objective by one of the several Australians on duty with the division.⁶

While this covering force deployed inland from its Florida beach, the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Hill) made a similar security landing at Florida's Halavo Peninsula near Gavutu and Tanambogo. The craft drew some fire from Gavutu but there were no casualties, and no enemy forces were encountered on the peninsula. These Marines later returned to their ships.

At Tulagi not a single landing craft of the first wave was able to set its passengers directly ashore. All of them hung up on

¹ At 0625, Tulagi sent its message to Japanese stations to the north that an enemy surface force had entered the channel. Tulagi CommB msg of 7Aug42 in 25th AirFlot War Diary, August-September 1942, hereinafter cited as *25th Air Flot Diary*.

² ComWaspAirGru Rept to CO *Wasp*, 10Aug42. In general, during the first day *Wasp* planes operated over the Tulagi area while *Saratoga* planes gave comparable support to the main landing off Beach Red at Guadalcanal. *Enterprise* planes gave protection to the carriers and flew patrol missions.

³ "0630—All flying boats have been set afire by the bombardment." CTF 18 ActRept, 6-10Aug42, 1, hereinafter cited as *CTF 18 AR*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ ComSoPac War Diary, 25Jul42 (located at NHD).

⁶ LtCol H. R. Thorpe ltr to CMC, 19Jan49.

coral formations at distances varying from 30 to well over 100 yards from the beach line, and the assault personnel of raider Companies B and D waded ashore against no opposition, through water initially from waist to armpit deep.⁷

Meanwhile the enemy defense forces, concentrated in the southeastern third of the island, realized that an all-out assault was underway. Between 0725 and 0749, the *Tulagi Communication Base* notified the Commanding Officer of the *Twenty-Fifth Air Flotilla* at Rabaul that Tulagi was under bombardment, that the landings had begun, and that the senders were destroying all equipment immediately. At 0800 the Japanese messages said shells were falling near the radio installation. Ten minutes later, the final message went out: "Enemy troop strength is overwhelming. We will defend to the last man."⁸

Companies B and D had reached the beach, and the landing craft carrying raider Companies A and C now began to hang upon the coral. The Weapons Company (Captain George W. Herring) of the raider battalion, whose 60mm mortars had been attached to the assault companies,⁹ headed ashore to assume responsibility for beachhead security.

Assaulting Marines crossed the beach and moved up the face of a steep, heavily-wooded coral slope, the southwestern portion of the 350-foot ridge that forms an almost unbroken wall along the island's entire length. Major Lloyd Nickerson's Company B pushed on to the far coast of the island where it captured, without oppo-

sition, the native village of Sasapi. This company then swung to the right and, tying in with Major Justice Chambers' Company D which had gained the high ground, began moving southeast. The advance of these two companies was steady and without opposition until Company B reached Carpenter's Wharf, halfway down the east shore of the island, where it encountered a series of enemy outposts.

Meanwhile additional raiders had landed. Captain Lewis W. Walt's Company A, landing to follow the leading companies, swung right atop the ridge spine, and tied in on the left with Company D. Major Kenneth Bailey's Company C also swung right, tied its left flank to Company A, and echeloned itself to the right rear to the beach. Spread out across the island, the raiders swept southeast against little opposition until Phase Line A, from the high ground northwest of Hill 281 to Carpenter's Wharf, was reached at 1120. Here Major Chambers was wounded by mortar fire, and Captain William E. Sperling assumed command of Company D.

By this time Colonel Edson, commanding the 1st Raider Battalion, was ashore and ready to begin a coordinated attack to the southeast. Confronting him was the more thickly settled portion of the island where the British governmental activities had centered. This area is a saddle between the ridge first swept by the raiders and a smaller hill mass at the island's southeastern end.¹⁰

After directing a preparatory fire of infantry weapons into the area to their front,

⁷ Maj J. C. Erskine interview in HistDiv, HQMC, 15Mar49.

⁸ *25th AirFlot Diary*.

⁹ Maj J. B. Sweeney, H. Stiff, W. E. Sperling interview in HistDiv, HQMC, 4Feb49, herein-after cited as *Sweeney Interview*.

¹⁰ The raiders had been well briefed on the terrain of the island by Lt H. E. Josselyn, RANR, a former resident of the area who had intimate knowledge of it. *Ibid*.

the raiders moved out toward the high ground beyond the saddle. Company C, on the right flank of the attack, drew fire almost immediately from Hill 208, a knob forward of the ridge that had just been cleared. The bulk of the Japanese resistance concentrated in the seaward face of the high ground, and Company C was caught by fire from enemy infantry weapons as it tried to pass between the hill and the beach. The raider company then turned its attack toward the hill and fought for nearly an hour before the Japanese positions were silenced.

Radio communications between Edson and General Rupertus deteriorated rapidly after this attack was launched, but the raider commander remained in contact with his fire support ships. Operation orders called for the various fire support sections to provide the landing force with naval gunfire liaison parties, and two of these were in Edson's CP with their radios.¹¹ When the other raider companies came under fire from Hill 281 while Company C fought against Hill 208, Edson put these naval gunfire teams to work. The *San Juan* fired a seven-minute, 280-round concentration of 6-inch shells onto Hill 281. When it lifted the raiders advanced with a steady pressure against the enemy.

Four hours later, at 1625, Edson notified Rupertus that 500 enemy had broken contact with his force and had withdrawn into the southeastern ridge.

The advance continued slowly until dusk. At that time Company E (raiders), relieved of the beach defense mission by 2/5 which had landed at 0916, reported to its parent organization. Company D, now on the extreme left flank, had met little

opposition since midmorning, when the first enemy encountered were flushed near Carpenter's Wharf by Company B. After this contact Company D pushed south along the eastern beach and at dusk reached the crest of Hill 281. Meanwhile Company B moved up again, now on the right of Company D, and gained high ground overlooking the cut of a cross-island roadway through the saddle between Hills 281 and 230. Company D, on the far side of the road and to the left of B, took up night defensive positions with its right flank resting on the southern brink of the cut. Company B, augmented by elements of Headquarters Company, rested its left flank on the cut and extended its lines generally westward along the brink.¹² Both companies put listening posts forward of the lines.

Companies A and C (less one platoon) meanwhile encountered the terrain feature which harbored the island's most serious resistance. In the forward slope of Hill 281, a deep ravine lay almost parallel to the raider advance and debouched several hundred yards southeast of Hill 208. Its sides were precipitous, and within it the enemy held strong positions which made assault hazardous. Maps which had been captured and translated during the day confirmed that this ravine would contain the core of enemy resistance.

With further action against the pocket impossible at the time, all battalion elements went into position for the night. Company E was placed on Company B's right, while Companies A and C (less one platoon) respectively tied in from the right of Company E. The positions extended along high ground facing the ra-

¹¹ CTF 18 AR, 2; Lt A. L. Moon ltr to LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., 13Feb49.

¹² Sweeney Interview.

vine's long axis, and listening posts were established.¹³

During Edson's sweep down the island, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (Rosecrans), had landed 1,085 officers and men and committed its units to various tasks. Company F scouted the northwest section of the island but met no opposition. At 1000 Company E was ordered to operate generally in support of Company B (raiders), and one hour later the 3d Platoon of Company H (weapons) went forward to assist Company C (raiders) in the latter's attack against Hill 208. By 1300, when the raider battalion began its attack from Phase Line A, Company G moved down the trail along the ridge line and supported the raider battalion. Rosecrans' command post later displaced southeast from near Beach Blue toward the scene of this action.

TULAGI—THE FIRST NIGHT AND SUCCEEDING DAY

The first night on Tulagi set the pattern for many future nights in the Pacific war. During darkness, four separate attacks struck the raider lines, and, although minor penetrations occurred, the enemy made no attempt to consolidate or exploit his gains. The first attack, which met with some initial success, hit between Companies C and A. Outposts fell back to the main line of resistance (MLR), and the two companies were forced apart. The attack isolated Company C from the rest of the battalion, but the company was not molested again. Company A refused its right flank and awaited developments.

They were not long in coming. Shifting the direction of his attack toward his right front, the enemy attempted to roll

back Walt's men from the refused flank. But the flank held, killing 26 Japanese within 20 yards of the MLR.

That ended the concerted attacks of the night. Thereafter, enemy efforts consisted entirely of attempts at quiet infiltration of the Marine positions. Individuals and small groups worked from the ravine through the raider lines and launched five separate small-scale attacks against the command post between 0030 and 0530. These were repulsed, and efforts on the part of two other enemy groups to skirt the beach flanks of Companies D and C likewise were turned back.

On the morning of 8 August, two companies of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, moved up to assist in the sweep of the southeastern part of the island. Companies E and F, 5th Marines, passed through Company D raiders, attacked down the forward slope of Hill 281, and swung right toward the enemy pocket in the ravine.

Now flanking this troublesome terrain feature on three sides, Marines laid down a heavy mortar concentration from the 60mm weapons of the raiders and 2/5's 81s. By midafternoon the preparation was complete, and at 1500 the raiders and Company G, 5th Marines, pushed through the ravine to wipe out remaining resistance. This ended organized opposition on the island, and by nightfall of 8 August Tulagi was labeled secure. For several days, however, individual Japanese and small groups continued to be flushed from hiding places and hunted down by patrolling Marines.

THE LANDINGS ON GAVUTU—TANAMBOGO

These islets, each dominated by a low, precipitous central hill of coral, are joined

¹³ *Ibid.*

by a 500-yard causeway. Gavutu's hill, 148 feet in height, stands some 25 to 30 feet higher than Tanambogo's highest point, and Gavutu thus became the main objective of the landing which aimed at the higher ground.

The plans¹⁴ called for the landing to strike the northeast coast after an approach from the east, and since Tanambogo lies approximately northwest of Gavutu the assault force faced the possibility of flanking fire from that island as well as frontal resistance from the main objective. Opposition from both islands was expected from the terrain dominating the flat beach.

Naval gunfire and close air support by SBD's from the *Wasp* were expected to neutralize most enemy emplacements on these hills, but the fire plan did not reckon with the coral cave. Caves of this type began to appear as serious obstacles for the parachute battalion on Gavutu at about the same time the raiders began to encounter them on Tulagi.

Surprise was impossible. There were not sufficient craft for simultaneous landings, and the hour of assault was established in General Vandegrift's Operation Order Number 7-42 as H-plus four hours. So four hours after the raider landing on Tulagi, the parachute battalion made its frontal assault in the face of fire from an alerted garrison which was supported by fires from a flanking position.

The battalion went ashore in three waves, one company per wave. The thor-

oughness with which the antiaircraft cruiser *San Juan* had carried out her fire support mission—280 rounds of 6-inch fire against Gavutu in four minutes¹⁵—and the intensity of the *Wasp's* dive-bombers' preparation caused heavy damage to the enemy installations, but this destruction actually worked to the disadvantage of the parachute battalion in one instance. The unit intended to land on a seaplane ramp from which the beach could be easily reached, but the ramp had been reduced to an unusable mass of rubble. Observing this, the landing wave commanders altered course slightly to the north where craft became even more vulnerable to flanking fire. Part of the troops, scrambling over a concrete pier that jutted four feet out of the water, were exposed to fire from both islands. General Vandegrift estimated that troops landing in this area suffered ten per cent casualties.

Company A, the first wave, got ashore without casualties to work inland against no serious opposition. The four boats carrying Company B and the final wave, with Company C and miscellaneous attachments, came under fire as they neared the island. The landing succeeded, however, and Company B, moving left and working toward Gavutu's southern end, gained some protection from enemy fire and continued to attack.

Pinned down on the beach under heavy fire, the other companies made no advances until Company B gained high ground from which its fire assisted in getting the attack off the beach. Hill 148, Gavutu's high ground, was plastered by naval guns and assaulted on the east and southeast. By 1430, Major Charles A. Miller, who had succeeded the wounded Major Robert H.

¹⁴ 1st Mar Div OpOrd No. 7-42, 20Jul42. See *FinalRept*, Phase II, Annex E, 2. Gavutu's importance stemmed from the islet's numerous installations which included machine shops, jetties, and a radio station. USN ND Hydro, Vol. I—*Sailing Directions For the Pacific Islands*. (Washington: GPO, 1938, 4th ed.), 323.

¹⁵ CTF 18 AR, 2.

Williams in command, controlled most of the island. Partially defiladed positions on Hill 148's west-southwestern slopes, however, still were active, and enemy emplacements there and on Tanambogo threatened further advance. Miller requested reinforcements to complete the capture of both islands.

In anticipation of their arrival, Miller also requested an air strike and naval gunfire on Tanambogo, and *Wasp* planes furnished a 10-minute strike while *Buchanan* and *Monssen*, in position south of Gavutu, fired over that island and subjected the exposed faces of the hill on Tanambogo to an intense concentration of 5-inch shells.

By this time all forces available to General Rupertus had been committed, but since Captain Edward Crane's Company B (1/2) had met no opposition on Florida near Tulagi, this unit was ordered to report to Miller. The message reached the company just as landing craft arrived to withdraw the Marines from their Florida beach.¹⁶

Embarked in six landing craft, the company arrived at Gavutu at about 1800, and Miller directed Crane to land on Tanambogo and seize that island. Told that only a few snipers held the island, Crane guided his overcrowded craft around the east shore of Tanambogo according to directions provided by Flight Lieutenant Spencer, RAAF, and under cover of darkness attempted a landing on a small pier on the northeastern tip of the island. (One boat, containing the 2d Platoon, hung up on a coral reef at Gavutu and took no part in the Tanambogo assault.)

The first boat landed without incident, and the men deployed along the beach; but as the second boat discharged its men,

a shell from one of the fire support ships ignited a nearby fuel dump, and the resulting glare lighted the landing area and exposed the Marines. The enemy opened up immediately, taking all boats under rifle and machine-gun fire. Casualties mounted among the Marines ashore and still afloat, but the boat crews, being exposed, suffered most heavily. One crew was completely wiped out and a Marine assumed control of the craft.

The reinforcing machine-gun platoon (4th Platoon, Company D) in the second boat managed to set up two of its weapons on the pier, but intense enemy fire forced a withdrawal.

In the meantime, Crane and about 30 men had gone ashore. The intensity of resistance, however, made withdrawal inevitable, and Crane succeeded in reembarking all wounded and all but 12 of the able survivors. The boats withdrew, some to Gavutu where they reported the event, and others direct to ships where the wounded were put aboard. Two of the men left ashore managed to return to Gavutu at about 2200 in a rowboat, while Crane and Lieutenant John J. Smith, leader of the 2d Platoon, and the remainder of the dozen men made their way around the beach and over the causeway to arrive at Miller's Gavutu command post about midnight.

At 2200, having been informed of the abortive attack on Tanambogo, General Rupertus requested the release of an additional combat team. This request reached Vandegrift during his conference with Admiral Turner on board the USS *McCawley*, and Vandegrift, Turner concurring, released the remaining two battalions of the Division Reserve. At 0330, 8 August, the USS *President Hayes* and *President Adams*, with the 1st and 3d Bat-

¹⁶ LtCol W. B. Kyle ltr to CMC, 10Feb49.

talions, 2d Marines (reinforced) embarked, were ordered to cross from the transport area off Guadalcanal's Beach Red to the Tulagi transport area. Simultaneously battalion commanders received orders to land their troops at Beach Blue on Tulagi and report to General Rupertus.¹⁷

Upon arrival at the transport area off Beach Blue at 0730, the 3d Battalion was directed to pass to Gavutu, reinforce the troops engaged there, and seize Tanambogo. Orders for the 1st Battalion were cancelled and this unit did not land.

The 3d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Hunt, landed on Gavutu in a succession of boat waves, with companies in the following order: Company L, with 5th Platoon, Company M attached, at 1000; Company K, with 4th Platoon, Company M attached, at 1025; Company I, with 3d Platoon, Company M attached, at 1050; Company M, less 3d, 4th, and 5th Platoons, with Headquarters Company, at 1120.

Troops deployed initially to eliminate Gavutu opposition and to take Tanambogo under fire. Company L, for example, assumed positions generally around the base of Hill 148 facing Tanambogo, while Company K moved up the hill to relieve parachute battalion elements in positions there. At 1330 Company K had just accomplished its mission when an SBD pilot dropped a bomb within company positions on the northwest nose of the hill. Three men were killed and nine wounded.

¹⁷ CWO T. W. Huston ltr to CMC, 28Dec48. Orders to report to Rupertus did not go through Col J. M. Arthur, CO 2dMar. Each battalion commander was notified direct, and it was not until he reached Espiritu Santo that Arthur knew which of his troops had been committed. Col R. E. Hill interview at HistDiv, 18Apr49.

Eight of the casualties were men of the supporting platoon of Company M.

At 1225, Captain W. B. Tinsley, commanding Company I, was ordered to prepare for a landing on Tanambogo. He would have the support of two tanks from Company C of the 2d Tank Battalion (one of the reinforcing units of the 2d Marines), and his attack would be preceded by a 10-minute naval gunfire preparation by the *Buchanan*. The company would not be accompanied by its supporting machine-gun platoon, which was to stay in position on Gavutu and lay down supporting fires from there.

At 1315 the tanks landed on Gavutu. Lieutenant E. J. Sweeney, commanding them, was ordered to land at 1615 on Tanambogo, using one tank to cover the south side of the hill on that island and the other to cover the eastern slope.

The naval gunfire preparation began at 1600. Twenty minutes later the assault company, following the tanks, made its landing. Lieutenant Sweeney was killed, but his tank rendered valuable support to the riflemen. The other tank, getting too far ahead of the assault troops, was disabled by an iron bar and set afire by oil-soaked rags employed by Japanese riflemen. The entire enemy group was wiped out; 42 bodies were piled up around the disabled tank.

At 1620 Company I landed and formed two attack groups. One worked up the southern slope of the Tanambogo hill while the other, moving to the right and then inland, attacked up the eastern slope. Japanese fought fiercely from caves and dugouts, and the eastern group drew fire from a few enemy riflemen and machine gunners on Gaomi, a tiny islet a few hundred yards east of Tanambogo. Naval

gunfire from USS *Gridley* was directed upon Gaomi at 1700 and positions on the small island were silenced. At this time the 1st platoon of Company K attacked across the causeway from Gavutu, secured the Tanambogo end of the causeway, and took up positions for the night.

By 2100, the southeastern two-thirds of the island had been secured, and at 2300 a light machine-gun platoon from Company M reported to Company I for support against enemy counterattacks. Considerable close-in fighting took place during the night between the Marines and Japanese who sallied from foxholes and dugouts. No change in position occurred, however, and by late the next day continued attacks had secured the island.

While Gavutu and Tanambogo were mopped up, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 2d Marines unloaded at Tulagi. The 1st Battalion, unengaged since its 7 August landing on Florida, went ashore at Beach Blue at 0900 on 9 August. The 2d Battalion (Major Orin K. Pressley) followed an hour later.

Here, as at Guadalcanal, the amphibian tractor emerged as a versatile piece of equipment whose importance and utility could hardly be overestimated. From noon of 8 August throughout the following night, five of these vehicles of the 3d Platoon, Company A, 2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion (one of the reinforcing elements of the 2d Marines) operated between Gavutu and the *President Adams*. They carried water, supplies, ammunition, and personnel to shore and evacuated wounded on the return trips. On one occasion a tractor moved some distance inland to attack a Japanese position that had pinned down and wounded a number of Marines. Using their two machine guns,

one .30 and one .50 caliber, the tractor's crew neutralized the enemy fire and then evacuated the wounded Marines.¹⁸ The five tractors of the platoon were taken back on board the *Adams* before sundown on 9 August.

With the fall of Tanambogo, the last effective resistance in the Nggela island group ceased. Subsequent operations consisted of mopping up, consolidating defenses, and occupying several small peripheral islands including Makambo, Mbangai, Kokomtumbu, and Songonangona.¹⁹

The mission of clearing out these small islands fell to various units of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines. Makambo was taken by Company E, Mbangai by Company F, and Kokomtambu and Songonangona, by Company G. Occupation of all these smaller islands was completed during the morning of 9 August. In all cases, opposition was slight.

Occupation of the entire island group and destruction of the Japanese garrison had been accomplished in three days. The few prisoners taken were questioned and sent to rear areas. Most of them finally were placed in a prisoner of war camp near Featherstone, New Zealand.

Comparatively, the American losses were not excessive. An early report by Rupertus to the effect that the parachute

¹⁸ "... this was an emergency undertaking only as it is not considered that the tractor is a tactical combat vehicle." *Final Rept*, Phase II, 16.

¹⁹ Spelling of place names are those which appear in *Sailing Directions for the Pacific Islands*, *op. cit.* The versions given there differ in numerous cases from those used in official reports of the campaign. Kokomtambu, for instance, appears in at least three different guises, while Songonangona surrendered its musical name to emerge as "Singsong" Island.

battalion had suffered 50-60 per cent casualties can only be explained in terms of inadequate communications between him and his troops ashore.

The exact number of Japanese casualties will never be known. An estimated 750-800 enemy were present in the Tulagi-Gavutu-Tanambogo area at the time of the landings. Twenty-three prisoners were taken, and an intelligence summary gives 70 as the approximate number of survivors who escaped to Florida.

Immediately after organized resistance ceased and the isolated defending groups were rounded up or wiped out, Tulagi and its satellite islands were organized for defense against counterattack. The 1st Parachute Battalion, depleted by its experience on Gavutu, moved from that island at 1700 on 9 August to Tulagi, where it went into position in the Government building area. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines occupied the southeastern sector of the island, while two battalions of the 2d Marines took over the defensive mission in the northwest. The 1st Battalion occupied the extreme end of the island while the 2d Battalion established positions at Sasapi. Third Battalion, 2d Marines, took over the occupation and defense of Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Makambo.²⁰

The logistic problem on Tulagi was a miniature of that encountered on Guadalcanal, although certain details were peculiar to Tulagi. The beachhead, for instance, was severely restricted by the abrupt ridge and, there were no usable

roads. Only after noon of the second day was it possible to move supplies ashore at the piers on the eastern coast. Both Gavutu and Tanambogo were so small that only ammunition and water were landed until the islands were secured.

Naval gunfire on this side of the Solomon Islands operation had more of a work-out than it had received across the channel at Guadalcanal where opposition was at first light, but it was not an unqualified success. As a matter of fact it was "very poor," according to naval headquarters in Washington.²¹ But this failing was caused mostly by lack of intelligence and time for planning and coordinated training. Improper ordnance made for another failing. Only armor-piercing shells could have blasted the Japanese from their caves, but the ships repeatedly fired high-capacity bombardment projectiles. Although many Naval officers were still of the opinion that a ship was a "fool to fight a fort," some began to agree with the Marine Corps that naval gunfire properly employed could be a big help in an amphibious assault. It was a case of the gunfire ships needing to move in closer for their fire missions. The commander of one ship reported:

It was observed that the enemy had not been driven from the beach at Gavutu by the shelling and bombing preceding the landing. Furthermore Tanambogo withstood two days of intermittent bombing and strafing and was not taken until a destroyer closed in to point blank range and shelled it for several minutes. It was evident that this fire was necessary to insure the capture of Tanambogo without further heavy casualties.²²

Taking into account the indications that these shortcomings would be corrected in

²⁰ Col C. P. Van Ness ltr to CMC, 12Jan49. Defense initially was oriented against an anticipated attack from Florida and artillery positions were selected with this, as well as the possibility of a sea-borne attack, in view. LtCol M. L. Curry interview at HistDiv, 28Jan49.

²¹ CominCh, "Battle Experiences, Solomons Island Action." *Information Bulletin No. 2* (located at NHD), Chap X, 10.

²² USS *Heywood* Rept, 12Aug42, 3.



TULAGI ISLAND, framed against the background of the larger Florida Island, is fire-swept from the hits scored by American carrier dive bombers. (USN 11649)



TANAMBOGO AND GAVUTU ISLANDS photographed immediately after a pre-landing strike by USS Enterprise planes; Gavutu is at the left across the causeway. (USN 11034)

later operations, the Marine Corps was generally satisfied with the ships' fire. "The operation did not involve a real test . . . [but] nothing developed during the operation to indicate the need for any fundamental change in doctrine."²³

After these three days of fighting in the Tulagi area, this side of the operation remained quiet. Enemy planes bypassed it to strike at the more tempting Guadal-

canal airfield and perimeter. Surface craft shelled Tulagi occasionally, but never was it subjected to the kind of bombardment that struck Guadalcanal in October. There is no record that enemy reinforcements landed either on Tulagi or on Florida Island. With this sharp fighting out of the way, the division could give all its attention to things on the larger island of Guadalcanal. There the picture was not a bright one.

²³ *Final Rept*, Phase V, 6.

The Battle of the Tenaru

With naval support gone, about the only hope was the airfield. Shipping would need air cover before regular runs could bolster the Marines' slim supply levels, and time was of the essence. If the Japanese struck hard while the landing force was abandoned and without air support, the precarious first step toward Rabaul might well have to be taken all over again. Vandegrift centered his defense at the field and gave completion of the strip top priority equal to the task of building the perimeter's MLR.

On 8 August, almost as soon as the field was captured, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Geraci, the Division Engineer Officer, and Major Kenneth H. Weir, Division Air Officer, had made an inspection of the Japanese project and estimated the work still needed. They told Admiral Turner that 2,600 feet of the strip would be ready in two days, that the remaining 1,178 feet would be operational in about two weeks. Turner said he would have aircraft sent in on 11 August. But the engineer officer had made his estimate before the transports took off with his bulldozers, power shovels, and dump trucks.¹

Again, however, the Marines gained from the Japanese failure to destroy their equipment before fleeing into the jungle.

¹ "The failure to land engineer equipment and machinery severely handicapped our efforts to complete the airfield and its defenses. Construction equipment and personnel are not a luxury but an absolute necessity in modern warfare." *Final Rept*, Phase III, 12-13.

Already the U. S. forces were indebted to the enemy for part of their daily two meals, and now they would finish the airfield largely through the use of enemy tools. This equipment included nine road rollers (only six of which would work), two gas locomotives with hopper cars on a narrow-gauge railroad, six small generators (two were damaged beyond repair), one winch with a gasoline engine, about 50 hand carts for dirt, some 75 hand shovels, and 280 pieces of explosives.

In spite of this unintentional assistance from the Japanese, the Marine engineers did not waste any affection on the previous owners of the equipment. The machinery evidently had been used continuously for some time with no thought of maintenance. Keeping it running proved almost as big a job as finishing the airfield, and one of the tasks had to be done practically by hand, anyway. The Japanese had started at each end of the airstrip to work toward the middle, and the landing had interrupted these efforts some 180 to 200 feet short of a meeting. Assisted by a few trucks and the narrow gauge hopper cars (which had to be loaded by hand), engineers, pioneers, and others who could be spared moved some 100,000 cubic feet of fill and spread it on this low spot at mid-field. A steel girder the Japanese had intended to use in a hangar served as a drag, and a Japanese road roller flattened and packed the fill after it had been spread.

Problems facing the infantry troops were just as great. There had been no impressive ground action on Guadalcanal since the landing, but intelligence in the immediate vicinity as well as in the South Pacific in general was not yet able to indicate when, how, and where Japanese reaction would strike. Estimating a counterlanding to be the most probable course of Japanese action, General Vandegrift placed his MLR at the beach. There the Marines built a 9,600-yard defense from the mouth of the Ilu River west around Lunga Point to the village of Kukum. The Ilu flank was refused 600 yards inland on the river's west bank, and at Kukum the left flank turned inland across the flat land between the beach and the first high ground of the coastal hills. The 5th Marines (less one battalion) held the left sector of the line from Kukum to the west bank of the Lunga, and the remainder of the line (inclusive of the Lunga) was held by the 1st Marines. (See Map 16)

The line was thin. The bulk of the combat forces remained in assembly areas inland as a ready reserve to check attacks or penetrations from any sector. Inland (south) of the airfield, a 9,000-yard stretch of rugged jungle terrain was outposted by men from the artillery, pioneer, engineer, and amphibian tractor battalions. These men worked during the day and stood watch on the lines at night.

The workers on the airfield as well as those on the thin perimeter were under almost constant enemy observation. Submarines and destroyers shelled the area at will day or night. Large flights of high-level bombers attacked the airfield daily, and observation planes were continually intruding with light bombs and strafing

attacks. At night the enemy patrols became increasingly bold, and troops on the MLR mounted a continuous alert during the hours of darkness. South of the airfield the outpost line had to be supplemented by roving patrols.

In spite of this harassment, the perimeter shaped up. The 1st Special Weapons Battalion dug in its 75mm tank destroyers (half-tracks) in positions inland from the beach, but kept them ready to move into prepared positions near the water. Howitzers of the 11th Marines were situated to deliver fire in all sectors. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the artillery regiment had 75mm pack howitzers and the 5th Battalion had 105mm howitzers. There were no 155mm howitzers or guns for counterbattery, there was no sound-flash equipment for the location of enemy batteries, and the 3d Defense Battalion had not had a chance to unload its 5-inch seacoast guns or radar units prior to the departure of the amphibious shipping. Air defense within the perimeter also was inadequate. There were 90mm antiaircraft guns ashore, but the restricted size of the perimeter kept them too close to the field for best employment.

It was a hazardous and remote toe-hold which the Marines occupied, and within the Pacific high command there were some grave doubts whether they could hang on. Major General Millard F. Harmon said to General Marshall in a letter on 11 August:

The thing that impresses me more than anything else in connection with the Solomon action is that we are not prepared to follow up. . . . We have seized a strategic position from which future operations in the Bismarcks can be strongly supported. Can the Marines hold it? There is considerable room for doubt.²

² CGSoPac ltr to CofSA, 11Aug42 (located at OCMH).

Admiral Ghormley, also concerned about the precarious Marine position,³ on 12 August ordered Admiral McCain's TF 63 to employ all available transport shipping to take aviation gasoline, lubricants, ammunition, bombs, and ground crews to Guadalcanal. To avoid Japanese air attacks, the ships were to leave Espiritu Santo in time to reach Sealark Channel late in the day, unload under cover of darkness, and depart early the following day.

For the "blockade run" to Guadalcanal, Admiral McCain readied four destroyer transports of TransDiv 12. They were loaded with 400 drums of aviation gasoline, 32 drums of lubricant, 282 bombs from 100- to 500-pounders, belted ammunition, tools, and spare parts. Also on board were five officers and 118 Navy enlisted men from a Navy construction base (Seabee) unit, Cub-1. Under the command of Major C. H. Hayes, executive officer of VMO-251, this unit was to aid the Marine engineers in work at the field and to serve as ground crews for fighters and dive bombers scheduled to arrive within a few days.

McCain's ships arrived off Guadalcanal during the night of 15 August, and the equipment and men were taken ashore. By this time the Marine engineers had filled the gap in the center of the landing strip and now labored to increase the length of the field from 2,600 feet to nearly 4,000 feet. Work quickened after the Seabees landed, but there was no steel matting and the field's surface turned to sticky

mud after each of the frequent tropical rains.

General Harmon blamed a faulty planning concept for the serious shortages of tools, equipment, and supplies. The campaign, he said, ". . . had been viewed by its planners as [an] amphibious operation supported by air, not as a means of establishing strong land based air action."⁴

But in spite of these shortages at the airfield and elsewhere, the Lunga Point perimeter was taking on an orderly routine of improvement and defense. Motor transport personnel had put their meager pool of trucks into operation shortly after the landing, and they had added some 35 Japanese trucks to the available list. Pioneers had built a road from the airfield to the Lunga River where they erected a bridge to the far side of the perimeter. Supply dumps also had been put in order. The pioneers cleared the landing beach, moving gear west to the Lunga-Kukum area, and sorted and moved Japanese supplies. The old Japanese beach at Kukum was cleaned up and reconditioned to receive U. S. material.

Most of the work of moving the beach dumps to permanent sites was completed in four days. There was a great amount of tonnage to handle in spite of the fact that only a small portion of the supplies had been landed. Amphibian tractors and all available trucks, including the Japanese, were used. The Government Track (the coastal road to Lunga) was improved and streams and rivers bridged to speed truck traffic. The amphibians carried their loads just offshore through shallow surf, and farther out to sea the lighters moved from old beach to new and back

³ He warned Adms King and Nimitz that Guadalcanal might again fall to the Japanese if carrier support and reinforcements were not made available. ComSoPac msgs to CinCPac and CominCh, 16 and 17 Aug 42, in SoPac War Diary (located at NHD).

⁴ CGSoPac ltr to CGAAF, 23 Aug 42 (located at OCMH).

again. The amount of supplies at each of the new classified dumps was kept low to avoid excessive loss from bombardment.

Captured material included almost every type item used by a military force—arms, ammunition, equipment, food, clothing, fuel, tools, and building materials:

As the division was acutely short of everything needed for its operation, the captured material represented an important if unforeseen factor in the development of the airfield and beach defenses and the subsistence of the garrison.⁵

The landing force was particularly short of fuel, but in this case the supply left behind by the Japanese garrison was not as helpful as it might have been. Marines found some 800 to 900 drums of Japanese aviation gasoline on Guadalcanal, but this 90-octane fuel was not quite good enough for our aircraft, and it was too "hot" and produced too much carbon in trucks and Higgins boats unless mixed evenly with U. S. 72-octane motor fuel. Likewise some 150,000 gallons of Japanese motor fuel of 60 or 65 octane proved unreliable in our vehicles although some of it was mixed with our fuel and used in emergency in noncombat vehicles.

So critical was the supply of gasoline and diesel fuel that the division soon adopted an elaborate routine of "official scrounging" from ships that came into the channel. Rows of drums were lined bung up on old artillery lighters, and these craft would wallow alongside ships where Marines would ask that a hose from the ships' bulk stores be passed over so they could fill the drums one at a time. This method helped the Marines' fuel supply, but not relations with the Navy. Small boats taking off supplies had difficulty negotiating

their passes alongside with the unwieldy lighters in the way, and ships officers quite frequently took a dim view of dragging along such bulky parasites when they had to take evasive action during the sudden air raids. But the system often worked well when early preparations were made with particularly friendly ships.

This over-water work in Sealark Channel, maintaining contact between Tulagi and Guadalcanal as well as meeting the supply ships which began to sneak in more frequently, pointed to another serious deficiency: there was no organized boat pool available to the division. More often than not the personnel and craft that the division used in those early days had merely been abandoned when the attack force departed, and there was no semblance of organization among them. Even the creation of order did not solve all the problems. A high percentage of the boats were damaged and crewmen had no repair facilities. The situation was gradually improved but was never satisfactory.

At last, on 18 August, the engineers and Seabees had a chance to stand back and admire their work. The airfield was completed. On 12 August it had been declared fit for fighters and dive bombers, but none were immediately available to send up. A Navy PBY had landed briefly on the strip on that date, but this was before Admiral McCain made his initial blockade run, and there was very little fuel for other planes anyway. But by the 18th the fill in the middle had been well packed, a grove of banyan trees at the end of the strip had been blasted away to make the approach less steep, and newly-arrived gasoline and ordnance were ready and waiting for the first customers. In the South Pacific during that period of shoestring existence,

⁵ *Final Rept*, Phase III, 4.



MARINE COMMANDERS ON GUADALCANAL appear in a picture taken four days after the landing which includes almost all the senior officers who led the 1st Marine Division ashore. Left to right, front row; Col George R. Rowan, Col Pedro A. del Valle, Col William C. James, MajGen Alexander A. Vandegrift, Col Gerald C. Thomas, Col Clifton B. Cates, LtCol Randolph McC. Pate, and Cdr Warwick T. Brown, USN. Second row: Col William J. Whaling, Col Frank B. Goettge, Col LeRoy P. Hunt, LtCol Frederick C. Biebush, LtCol Edwin A. Pollock, LtCol Edmund J. Buckley, LtCol Walter W. Barr, and LtCol Raymond P. Coffman. Third row: LtCol Francis R. Geraci, LtCol William E. Maxwell, Col Edward G. Hagen, LtCol William N. McKelvy, LtCol Julian N. Frisbee, Maj Milton V. O'Connell, Maj William Chalfont, III, Capt Horace W. Fuller, and Maj Forest C. Thompson. Fourth row: Maj Robert G. Ballance, Maj Henry W. Buse, Jr., Maj James G. Frazer, Maj Henry H. Crockett, LtCol Leonard B. Cresswell, LtCol John A. Bemis, Maj Robert B. Luckey, LtCol Samuel G. Taxis, and LtCol Eugene H. Price. Last row: Maj Robert O. Bowen, LtCol Merrill B. Twining, Maj Kenneth W. Benner (behind Bemis), LtCol Walker A. Reeves, LtCol John DeW. Macklin, LtCol Hawley C. Waterman, and Maj James C. Murray. Many of these men went on to become general officers and three of them (Vandegrift, Cates, and Pate) later became Commandants of the Marine Corps. (USMC 50509)

however, "readiness" was a comparative thing. There were no bomb handling trucks, carts or hoists, no gas trucks, and no power pumps.

The state of readiness had a way of fluctuating rapidly, too, and the breathing spell for the workers did not last long. With most sadistic timing, a large flight of Japanese planes came over and scored 17 hits on the runway. One engineer was killed, nine were wounded, and the field "was a mess."⁶

The runway damage was disquieting but not altogether a surprise. Air raids had been frequent, shelling from offshore submarines likewise was common, and planes droned overhead frequently during the hours of darkness to drop small bombs here and there at well-spaced intervals. After the big raid on the 18th, the well-practiced repair teams merely went to work again. In filling the craters, the engineers and Seabees first squared the holes with hand shovels and then air hammered the new dirt solid by tamping every foot and a half of fill. They had found that this system kept settling to a minimum and prevented dangerous pot holes.

Two days later Henderson Field, named after Major Lofton Henderson, a Marine aviator killed at Midway, was again ready. And this time the planes arrived. The forward echelon of Marine Aircraft Group 23, the first arrivals, numbered 19 F4F's and 12 SBD-3's. The units were under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Fike, executive officer of the air group. The F4F's, a part of Marine Fighter Squadron 223, were commanded by Major John L. Smith, and the 12 Douglas dive bombers from Marine Scout-

Bomber Squadron 232 were led by Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Mangrum.

Arrival of planes ended an era for the Guadalcanal defenders—the hazardous period from 9 to 20 August when the landing force operated entirely without air or surface support. During this period lines of communications were most uncertain. Nothing was known of the general naval situation or the extent of losses at sea, and little information was received from aerial reconnaissance from rear areas. Ashore, patrolling was constant, but the terrain was such that much could be missed. Short rations, continuous hard work, and lack of sleep reflected in the physical condition of the troops. Morale, however, remained high.

Formed in March of 1942 at Ewa, Oahu, MAG-23 remained in training there, with much shifting of personnel and units, until this two-squadron forward echelon sailed to the South Pacific on 2 August on board the escort carrier *Long Island*. Smith's men had just been issued new F4F's with two-stage superchargers, and Mangrum's unit had turned in its old SBD-2's for the newer 3's with self-sealing gasoline tanks and armor plate. The remaining two squadrons of the group, Captain Robert E. Galer's VMF-224 and Major Leo R. Smith's VMSB-231, would sail from the Hawaiian area on 15 August.

John Smith's VMF-223 and Mangrum's VMSB-232 came down by way of Suva in the Fijis and Efate in the New Hebrides. At Efate, Smith traded some of his young, less-experienced pilots to Major Harold W. Bauer's VMF-212 for some fliers with more experience. On the afternoon of 20 August, the *Long Island* stood 200 miles southeast of Guadalcanal and launched the planes.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Annex C, 2.

Two days later, on 22 August, the first Army Air Force planes, five P-400's⁷ of the 67th Fighter Squadron, landed on the island. On 24 August, 11 Navy dive bombers from the battle-damaged *Enterprise* moved to Henderson Field to operate for three months, and on 27 August nine more Army P-400's came in. Performance of these Army planes was disappointing. Their ceiling was 12,000 feet because they had no equipment for the British high-pressure oxygen system with which they were fitted, and they could not reach the high-flying enemy planes. Along with the Marine SBD's, the P-400's spent their time during Japanese air raids off strafing and bombing ground targets, and they returned to Henderson after the hostile planes departed.

A short while later—early in September—supply and evacuation flights were initiated by two-engined R4D's (C-47's) of Marine Aircraft Group 25. Flying daily from Espiritu Santo and Efate, the cargo planes each brought in some 3,000 pounds of supplies and were capable of evacuating 16 stretcher patients.

Although this increased air activity at Henderson Field was of great importance to the operation in general and the combat Marines in particular, the field still was not capable of supporting bombers which could carry attacks to Japanese positions farther to the north. On 20 August General Harmon voiced the opinion that it would be too risky to base B-17's at Henderson until more fighter and antiaircraft protection were available.⁸

⁷ Early P-39 "klunkers" converted for export to the British. They could carry one bomb, were armed with a 20mm cannon, two .50 caliber, and four .30 caliber machine guns.

⁸ CGSoPac Summary of Situation, 20Aug42 (located at NHD).

Early in September he suggested that heavy bombers stage through the Guadalcanal field from the New Hebrides and thus strike Rabaul and other Japanese bases,⁹ but a closer investigation pointed up the impracticality of this plan. It would have meant hand-pumping more than 3,500 gallons of gasoline into each bomber landing at Guadalcanal on the 1,800-mile round trip from the New Hebrides to the Northern Solomons; and although this manual labor was not too great a price to pay for an opportunity to strike at the Japanese, it was impossible to maintain a fuel stock of that proportion at Henderson Field.

GROUND ACTION

Combat troops meanwhile probed the jungles with patrols, and early reconnaissance indicated that the bulk of Japanese troops was somewhere between the Matanikau River, about 7,000 yards west of the Lunga, and Kokumbona, a native village some 7,500 yards west of the Matanikau. General Vandegrift wanted to pursue the enemy and destroy him before the Japanese could reinforce this small, disorganized garrison, but no substantial force could be spared from the work of building the MLR and the airfield.

Minor patrol clashes occurred almost daily, but many of these meeting engagements were with wandering bands of uniformed laborers who only confused attempts to locate the main enemy force. This patrolling gradually revealed that the area between the Matanikau and Kokumbona was the main stronghold, however. Stiff resistance continued there with each attempt to probe the area, and this

⁹ CGSoPac ltr to CofSA, 9Sep42 (located at NHD).

pattern had started as early as 9 August when one officer and several enlisted men were wounded while trying to cross the river. This patrol had reported the west bank of the river well organized for defense. The enemy kept shifting his position, though, to maneuver for an advantage against the patrols which came to seek him out. Final confirmation of the enemy location came on 12 August when a Japanese warrant officer captured behind the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines said that his unit was between the Matanikau and Kokumbona.

Under questioning, the prisoner admitted that possibly some of his fellow garrison mates were wandering aimlessly through the jungle without food and that some of them might surrender. First Sergeant Stephen A. Custer of the division intelligence section made plans to lead an amphibious patrol to the area. Meanwhile, a Marine patrol reported seeing what it took to be a white flag west of the river. Hearing these reports, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Goettge, division intelligence officer, decided to lead the patrol himself.

The original plan had called for an early start so that a daylight landing could be made. The patrol then would work inland along the west bank of the Matanikau and bivouac for the night far back in the hills. The second day was to be spent in a cross-country return to the perimeter. The primary mission of the patrol would be that of reconnaissance, but it was to be strong enough for combat if it ran into a fight.

Colonel Goettge's new plans delayed departure of the patrol about 12 hours and cut down its combat potential by including among its 25-man strength Lieutenant Commander Malcolm L. Pratt, assistant

division surgeon, Lieutenant Ralph Cory, a Japanese linguist, and several members of the 5th Marines intelligence section. The boat got away from the perimeter at about 1800 and landed after dark at 2200 at an undetermined point west of the Matanikau. The Japanese, instead of surrendering, attacked the patrol and cut off from the beach all but three men who escaped back into the surf to swim and waded to safety.

One of these men, Sergeant Charles C. Arndt, arrived in the perimeter at about 0530 on 13 August to report that the patrol had encountered enemy resistance. Company A, 5th Marines set off immediately as a relief patrol to be reinforced later by two platoons of Company L and a light machine-gun section. Meanwhile, the other two escaped patrol members, Corporal Joseph Spaulding and Platoon Sergeant Frank L. Few, came back at 0725 and 0800 respectively and revealed that the remainder of the Goettge patrol had been wiped out.

The relief patrol landed west of Point Cruz, a coastal projection a short distance west of the Matanikau's mouth. Company A moved east along the coastal road back toward the perimeter while the reinforced platoons of Company L traveled over the difficult terrain inland from the beach. Company A met brief Japanese resistance near the mouth of the river, but neither force found a trace of the Goettge patrol.¹⁰

This action was followed a week later by a planned double envelopment against the village of Matanikau. Companies B and L of the 5th Marines would carry out

¹⁰ Goettge's position as Division G-2 was filled on 14 August by LtCol E. J. Buckley, formerly of the 11th Marines. *Final Rept*, Phase III, Annex F, 5.



MARINE ENGINEERS erected this bridge across the Tenaru River to speed the flow of troops and supplies from the beaches to the perimeter. (USMC 50468-A)



SOLOMONS NATIVES, recruited by Captain W. F. Martin Clemens, BSIDF, guide a patrol up the winding course of the Tenaru River in search of Japanese. (USMC 53325)

this attack while Company I of the same regiment made an amphibious raid farther west, at Kokumbona, where it was hoped that any Japanese retreating from Matanikau could be cut off. On 18 August Company L moved inland, crossed the Matanikau some 1,000 yards from the coast, and prepared to attack north into the village the next day. Company B, to attack west, moved along the coastal road to the east bank of the river.

Next day, after preparation fire was laid down by the 2d, 3d, and 5th Battalions of the 11th Marines, Company L launched its attack. Shortly after jumping off, scouts discovered a line of emplacements along a ridge some 1,000 yards to the left flank of the company front. The platoon on this flank engaged the small enemy force in these emplacements while the remainder of the company moved on toward the village. In this action off the left flank, Sergeant John H. Branic, the acting platoon leader, was killed. The company executive officer, Lieutenant George H. Mead, Jr. next took command. When he was killed a short time later Marine Gunner Edward S. Rust, a liaison officer from the 5th Marines headquarters took command. This platoon continued to cover the advance of the remainder of the company.

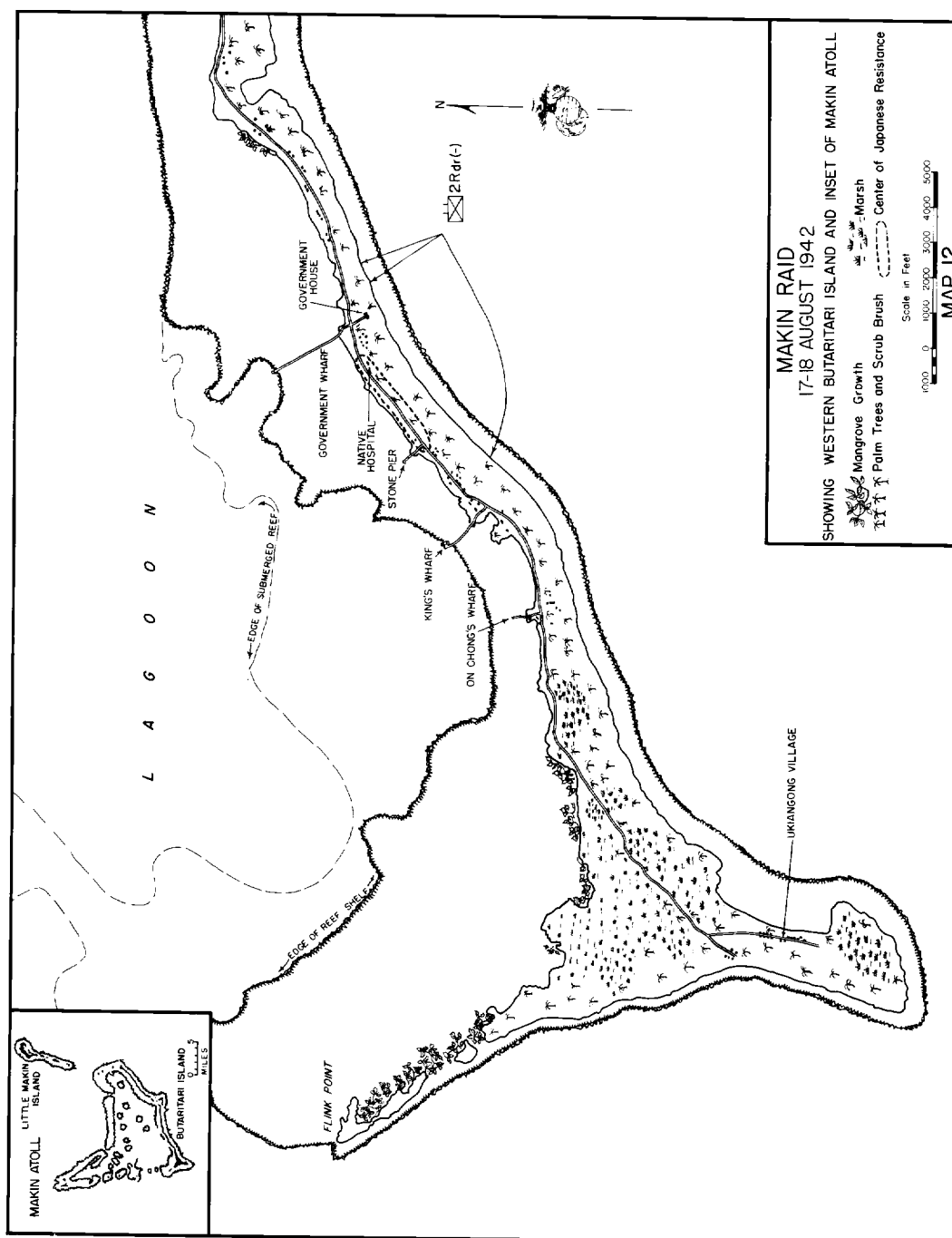
Company B, thwarted in its attempt to cross the river because of intense Japanese fire from the west bank, could only support the attack of its sister company by fire. Company L managed to reach the outskirts of the native village at about 1400, however, and one platoon entered the settlement. This platoon lost contact with the remainder of the company, and when the other platoons attempted to enter the village they were met by a strong Japanese counterattack which caused the separated platoon to withdraw to company lines. The Marines were nearly enveloped and

succeeded in repulsing the attack only after close-range fighting. Defending in depth, the Japanese drew up on a line which extended from the river some 200 yards west through the village. While the Marines maneuvered for an attack, the Japanese fire became more sporadic, and an assault at about 1600 revealed that the enemy pocket had dispersed.

Meanwhile the amphibious raid of Company I also aroused opposition. Two enemy destroyers and a cruiser lobbed shells at the landing craft while they swung from the Marine perimeter to Kokumbona, and the raiding party escaped this threat only to be met at the beach by Japanese machine-gun fire. The landing succeeded, however, and the enemy resistance began to melt. By the time a Marine attack swept through the village, the defenders had retired into the jungle to avoid a conclusive engagement. The three companies killed 65 Japanese while suffering the loss of four Marines killed and 11 wounded.

Although these actions served only to locate the general area into which the original Japanese garrison of Guadalcanal had withdrawn in the face of the Marine landing, another patrol on 19 August indicated the pattern of things to come on the island.

The patrol and reconnaissance area assigned to the 1st Marines lay east and southeast of the perimeter where the plains of the Lunga fan into a grassy tableland which is nearly eight miles wide near the coastal village of Tetere. Some thought had been given to the construction of an airfield there, and on 12 August a survey party went out with a platoon-sized security force under Second Lieutenant John J. Jachym. Passing through a native village on 13 August, this group encountered Father Arthur C. Duhamel, a young Cath-



olic priest from Methuen, Massachusetts,¹¹ who related native rumors of an enemy force along the coast to the east.

Two days later a partial verification of the priest's information was made by Captain (of the British Solomon Islands Defense Force) W. F. M. (Martin) Clemens, the district officer who had withdrawn into the hills to become a coastwatcher when the Japanese entered his island. On 14 August Clemens left his watching station near Aola Bay with his 60 native scouts¹² and entered the Marine perimeter. Clemens and his scouts reported seeing signs of a new Japanese force. And on the heels of Clemens' reports came word from Admiral Turner that naval intelligence indicated a Japanese attack in force.

To investigate, Captain Charles H. Brush, Jr. took a part of his Company A of the 1st Marines and at 0700 on 19 August began a patrol eastward along the coastal track toward Koli Point and Tetere. At about noon near Koli Point the patrol spotted a group of four Japanese officers and 30 men moving, with no security to front or flanks, between the road and the beach. Captain Brush struck frontally with a part of his unit while Lieutenant Jachym led an envelopment around the enemy left flank. In 55 minutes of fighting, 31 of the Japanese were killed. The remaining three escaped into

the jungle. Three Marines were killed and three wounded.

It was clear that these troops were not wandering laborers or even members of the original garrison. Helmets of the dead soldiers bore the Japanese Army star rather than the anchor and chrysanthemum device of the special landing force. A code for ship-to-shore communications to be used for a landing operation also was found among the effects, and the appearance of the uniforms indicated that the troops were recent arrivals to Guadalcanal. There appeared little doubt that the Japanese were preparing an attempt to recapture their lost airfield. And Brush found they had already completed some excellent advance work:

With a complete lack of knowledge of Japanese on my part, the maps the Japanese had of our positions were so clear as to startle me. They showed our weak spots all too clearly.¹³

While these patrols searched for the enemy on Guadalcanal, another force of approximately 200 Marines moved into enemy waters farther north and raided a Japanese atoll in the Gilbert Islands. Companies A and B of Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson's 2d Raider Battalion went from Oahu to Makin atoll on board submarines *Argonaut* and *Nautilus* and landed on the hostile beach early on 17 August. The raid was planned to destroy enemy installations, gather intelligence data, test raiding tactics, boost homefront morale, and possibly to divert some Japanese attention from Guadalcanal. It was partially successful on all of these counts, but its greatest asset was to home-front morale. At a cost to themselves of 30 men lost, the raiders wiped out the Japanese garrison of about 85 men, destroyed radio

¹¹ Father Duhamel, as well as Father Henry Oude-Engberink and Sister Sylvia of France, and Sister Odilia of Italy, were later tortured and killed by the Japanese.

¹² Including Vouza, a retired sergeant major of police and native of the Tetere area who previously had volunteered additional service to the Crown and Capt Clemens. A veteran of 25 years in the native constabulary, the "reactivated" Vouza provided valuable assistance to the coastwatchers and to the Marines.

¹³ Maj C. H. Brush, Jr. ltr to CMC, 15Jan49.

stations, fuel, and other supplies and installations, and went back on board their submarines on 18 August for the return to Pearl Harbor. This raid attracted much attention in the stateside press but its military significance was negligible. Guadalcanal still held the center of the stage in the Pacific and attention quickly turned back to that theater.¹⁴ (See Map 12)

BATTLE OF THE TENARU¹⁵

The picture that began to take shape as these bits of intelligence fitted together provided an early warning of Japanese plans that already were well underway. On 13 August, Tokyo ordered Lieutenant General Haruyoshi Hyakutake's *Seventeenth Army* at Rabaul to take over the ground action on Guadalcanal and salvage the situation. The naval side of this reinforcement effort would be conducted by Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka, a wily Imperial sea dog who was a veteran of early landings in the Philippines and Indonesia and of the battles of Coral Sea and Midway. With no clear picture of his opponent's strength, Hyakutake decided to retake the Lunga airfield immediately with a force of about 6,000 men. On the evening of the 15th of August, while Tanaka's ships of the reinforcement force were load-

ing supplies at Truk, the admiral got orders to hurry down to Rabaul and take 900 officers and men to Guadalcanal at once. Hyakutake had decided that the attack would begin with a part of the *7th Division's 28th Infantry Regiment* and the *Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force*. These units would be followed by the *35th Brigade*.

Admiral Tanaka thought he was being pressed a little too hard, considering that the *Eighth Fleet* under which he operated had just been formed at Rabaul on 14 July, and that the admiral himself had hardly been given time to catch his breath after hurrying away from Yokosuka for his new job on 11 August. The admiral reported later:

With no regard for my opinion . . . this order called for the most difficult operation in war—landing in the face of the enemy—to be carried out by mixed units which had no opportunity for rehearsal or even preliminary study. . . . In military strategy expedience sometimes takes precedence over prudence, but this order was utterly unreasonable.

I could see that there must be great confusion in the headquarters of Eighth Fleet. Yet the operation was ordained and underway, and so there was no time to argue about it.¹⁶

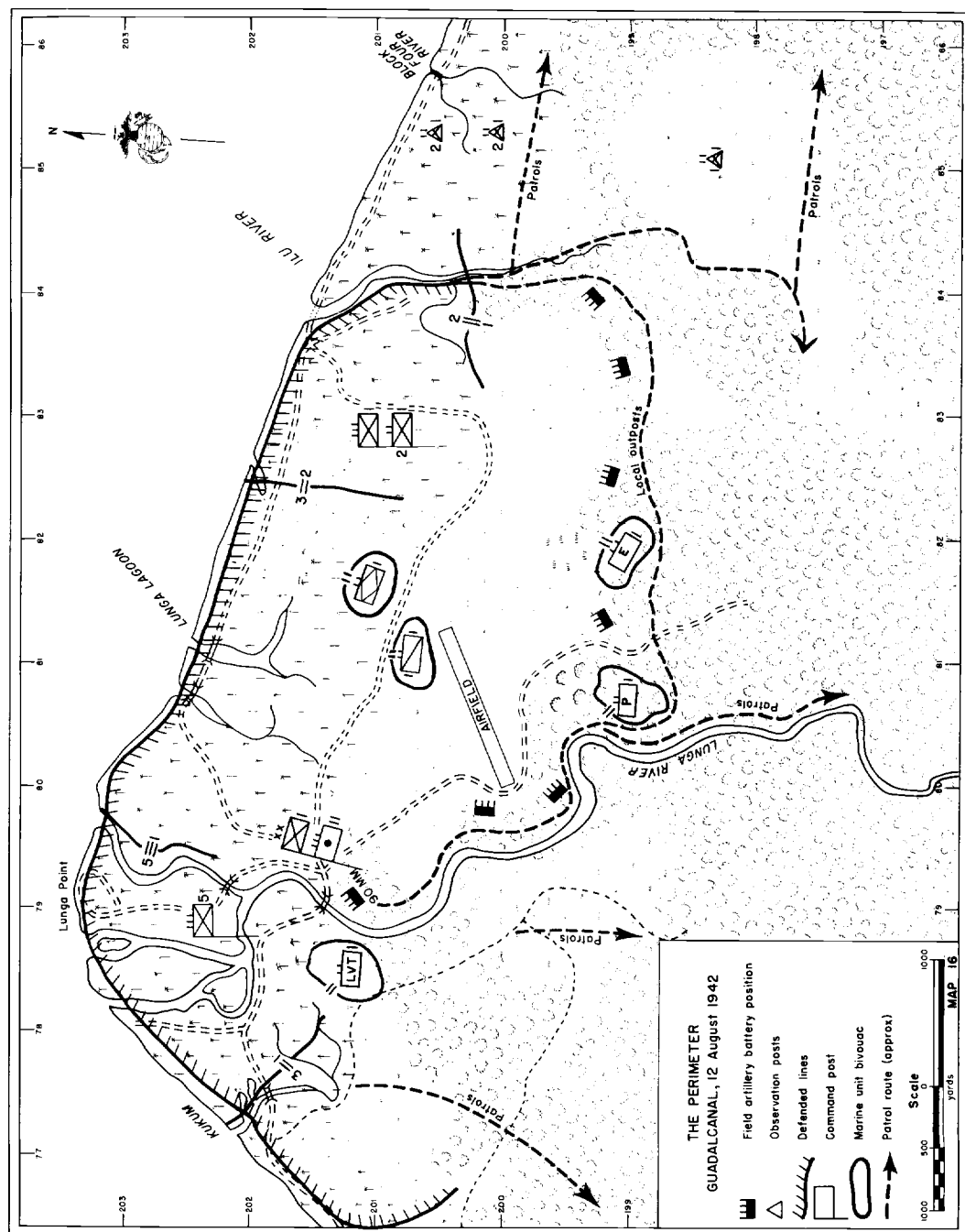
Backbone of the initial effort would consist of the reinforced *2d Battalion, 28th Infantry*, a 2,000-man force of infantry, artillery, and engineers under the command of Colonel Kiyono Ichiki. This force had been en route to Midway when the defeat of the Japanese carriers caused a change to Guam.¹⁷ Later the *Ichiki Force* was en route back to the home islands when the Marine landing in the Solomons brought another change of

¹⁴ CTF 7.15 Rept, 24Aug42; 2dRdrBn Rept of Ops on MakinIs, 19Aug42; WDC Japanese Documents No. 161,013, 161,110, and NA 12053, "Records of Various Base Forces" and "Base Force Guard Units and Defense Unit Records," 17-22-Aug42 (located at NHD).

¹⁵ Actually the Ilu. But as previously explained, Marines of the division identified these rivers incorrectly throughout the campaign and the action to be described has thus become known historically and to the participants as the Battle of the Tenaru.

¹⁶ *Tanaka Article*, I, 690. Excerpts from this account are quoted in this volume with the permission of the U. S. Naval Institute.

¹⁷ See Part V of this volume.



Japanese plans. The unit was diverted to Truk where it landed on 12 August and was attached to the *35th Brigade* which then garrisoned the Palau Islands. The brigade's commander was Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi. The 900 or 1,000 men which Admiral Tanaka loaded for his first reinforcement run to Guadalcanal were from this Ichiki unit.

The reinforcement ships landed Colonel Ichiki and this forward echelon at Taivu Point on Guadalcanal during the night of 18 August. While this force landed at this point some 22 air miles east of the Lunga, some 500 men of the *Yokosuka Fifth Special Naval Landing Force* arrived at Kokumbona. This was the first of many runs of the Tokyo Express, as Marines called the Japanese destroyers and cruisers which shuttled supplies and reinforcements up and down The Slot in high-speed night runs. Brush's patrol had encountered part of Ichiki's forward echelon, and the Japanese commander, shaken by the fact that he had been discovered, decided to attack at once.

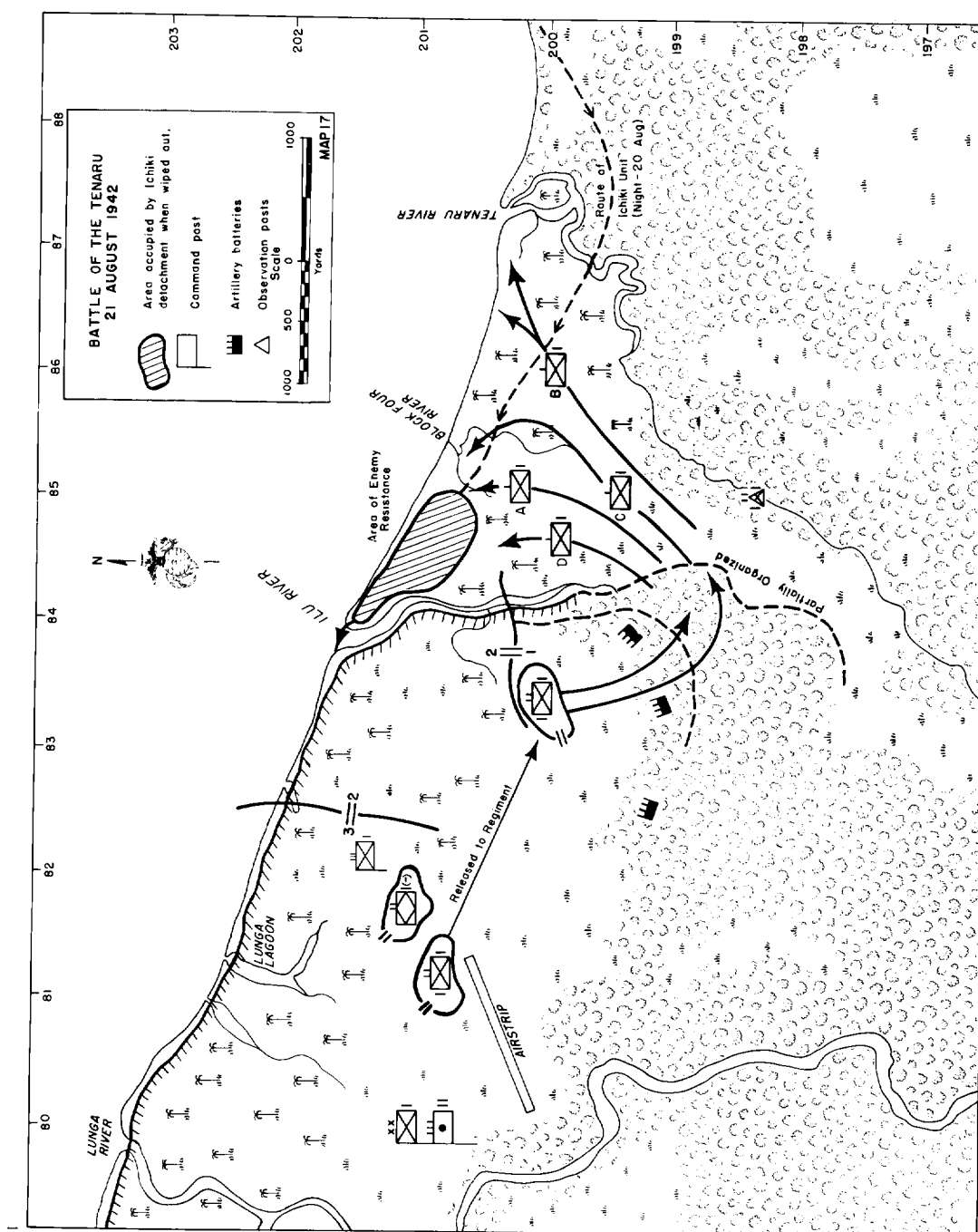
At that time the Marines had five infantry battalions available for defense of Lunga Point. Four battalions were committed to beach defense, one was withheld in division reserve. On 15 August work had begun on a new extension of the right flank by refusing it inland along the west bank of the Ilu River (then called the Tenaru) for a distance of 3,200 yards. This plan involved road and bridge construction as well as extensive clearing before field fortifications could be built. As of 18 August little progress had been made. (See Map 17)

In the face of the threats pointed out by intelligence sources, the division considered two courses of action: first, to send the division reserve across the Ilu to locate

and destroy the enemy, or, second, to continue work on defensive positions while limiting actions to the east to strong patrols and outposts. The first course, General Vandegrift realized, involved accepting the premise that the main Japanese force had landed to the east and that it could be dealt with by one Marine battalion. But if Brush's patrol had encountered only a small part of the new enemy unit while the bulk of the force stood poised to strike from another direction, or from the sea, absence of the reserve battalion would become a serious manpower shortage in the perimeter. The intelligence Vandegrift had gleaned from all sources was good, but there wasn't enough of it. So the division sat tight to await developments. Work continued on field fortifications, native scouts worked far to the east, and Marines maintained a strong watch on the perimeter each night.

The Marines did not have long to wait. Colonel Ichiki had wasted no time preparing his attack, and during the night of 20-21 August Marine listening posts on the east bank of the Ilu detected enemy troops moving through the jungle to their front. A light rattle of rifle fire was exchanged, both sides sent up flares, and the Marines withdrew across the river mouth to the lines of their battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Edwin A. Pollock's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines. They reported that a strong enemy force appeared to be building up across the river.¹⁸

¹⁸ At about the same time the native scout Vouza entered the command post of 2/1 to warn LtCol Pollock about the Japanese buildup. Badly wounded, Vouza had been captured by the Ichiki Force, knifed about the face, throat, and chest when he wouldn't talk, and then left for dead by the Japanese. This report to Pollock was one of the many services for which Vouza later was cited by the Americans and British.



By this time Ichiki had assembled his force on the brush-covered point of land on the east bank of the river, and all was quiet until 0310 on 21 August when a column of some 200 Japanese rushed the exposed sandspit at the river mouth. Most of them were stopped by Marine small-arms fire and by a canister-firing 37mm antitank gun of the 1st Special Weapons Battalion. But the Marine position was not wired in, and the weight of the rushing attack got a few enemy soldiers into Pollock's lines where they captured some of his emplacements. The remainder of the line held, however, and fire from these secure positions kept the penetration in check until the battalion reserve could get up to the fight. This reserve, Company G, launched a counterattack that wiped out the Japanese or drove them back across the river.

Ichiki was ready with another blow. Although his force on the east bank had not directly supported this first attack, it now opened up with a barrage of mortar and 70mm fire, and this was followed by another assault. A second enemy company had circled the river's mouth by wading beyond the breakers, and when the fire lifted it charged splashing through the surf against the 2d Battalion's beach positions a little west of the river mouth.

The Marines opened up with everything they had. Machine-gun fire sliced along the beach as the enemy sloshed ashore, canister from the 37mm ripped gaping holes in the attack, and 75mm pack howitzers of the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines chewed into the enemy. Again the attack broke up, and daylight revealed a sandy battlefield littered with the bodies of the Japanese troops who had launched Guadalcanal's first important ground action.

Although outnumbered at the actual point of contact, Pollock assessed the situation at daybreak and reported that he could hold. His battalion had fire superiority because of the excellent artillery support and because the course of the river gave part of his line enfilade fire against the enemy concentration in the point of ground funneling into the sandspit. In view of this, General Vandegrift ordered Pollock to hold at the river mouth while the division reserve, the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines enveloped Ichiki. While this battalion prepared for its attack, Company C of the 1st Engineer Battalion went forward to Pollock's command to help bolster defensive positions. During the morning the engineers built antitank obstacles, laid a mine field across the sandspit, and helped the 2/1 Marines string tactical wire and improve field fortifications. They were under intermittent rifle fire during most of this work.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Lenard B. Cresswell's division reserve battalion had reverted to parent control and reported to Colonel Cates to receive the attack plan for the envelopment. Before 0700, Cresswell crossed the Ilu upstream, posted elements of his Company D (weapons) to cover a possible Japanese escape route to the south, and then turned north toward the *Ichiki Force*. By 0900 his companies crossed their lines of departure in the attack against the Japanese left and rear.

Company C on the right along the coast met one platoon of the enemy near the village at the mouth of the Block Four River, and the Marines moved to encircle this force and isolate it from the remainder of Ichiki's unit farther west. The other companies moved north with little opposi-

tion, A on the right and B on the left. As the advance continued, the enemy was forced into the point of land on the Ilu's east bank. By 1400 the enemy was confined completely by the river, the beach, and the envelopment from the left and rear. Some of the Japanese made unsuccessful attempts to escape through the surf and along the beach; another group burst out temporarily to the east but ran head-on into Company C moving up from its battle at the mouth of the Block Four.

The fight continued, with Cresswell tightening his encirclement, and more of the Japanese attempted to strike through to the east. These breakout attempts gave the new Guadalcanal fliers, on the island less than 24 hours, a chance to fire their first shots in anger, and the F4F pilots from VMF-223 gave Cresswell's Marines a hand with strafing attacks that destroyed the Japanese or turned them back into the infantry trap.

To conclude the action by nightfall, Vandegrift ordered a tank attack across the sandspit and into what now had become the rear of the *Ichiki Force*. The platoon of light tanks struck at 1500, firing at the enemy with canister and machine guns. Two tanks were disabled, one by an antitank mine, but the crews were rescued by the close supporting action of other tanks and the attack rolled on into the Japanese positions. It was over by 1700. Nearly 800 Japanese had been killed and 15 were taken prisoner while only a few escaped into the jungle. Disgraced by the debacle, Colonel Ichiki committed suicide.

The action cost the Marines 34 dead and 75 wounded. A policing of the Japanese battlefield gleaned the division ten heavy and 20 light machine guns, 20 grenade

throwers, 700 rifles, 20 pistols, an undetermined number of sabers and grenades, three 70mm guns, large quantities of explosive charges, and 12 flame throwers. The flame throwers were not used in the action.

Admiral Tanaka later had this to say about the disaster:

I knew Colonel Ichiki from the Midway operation and was well aware of his magnificent leadership and indomitable fighting spirit. But this episode made it abundantly clear that infantrymen armed with rifles and bayonets had no chance against an enemy equipped with modern heavy arms. This tragedy should have taught us the hopelessness of 'bamboo-spear' tactics.¹⁹

BATTLE OF THE EASTERN SOLOMONS

While Colonel Ichiki prepared for his ill-fated attack, Rear Admiral Tanaka and Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, the *Eighth Fleet* commander, worked to get the colonel's second echelon ashore for what they hoped would be an orderly, well-coordinated effort against the Marines. These troops were on board the *Kinryu Maru* and four destroyer transports, and they were escorted by the seaplane carrier *Chitose* with her 22 floatplanes and by Tanaka's *Destroyer Squadron 2*, which Tanaka led in light cruiser *Jintsu*. A larger naval force operated farther to the east outside the Solomons chain. In all, the Japanese task forces included three aircraft carriers, eight battleships, four heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 22 destroyers in addition to the five transport vessels.

At this time Admiral Fletcher's force of two carriers, one battleship, four cruisers, and ten destroyers operated to the southeast of the Lower Solomons conduct-

¹⁹ *Tanaka Article*, I, 691.

ing routine searches to the northwest. Fletcher believed the area to be temporarily safe from Japanese naval trespass, and he had sent the carrier *Wasp* off to refuel. This left him only the *Enterprise* and the *Saratoga* for his air support.

On 23 August, two days after the Battle of the Tenaru, American patrol planes first sighted the Japanese transports and the Tanaka escort some 350 miles north of Guadalcanal. Marine planes from Henderson Field attempted to attack the troop carriers, but a heavy overcast forced them back to Lunga. The fliers had a better day on the 24th, however. At 1420 the F4F pilots intercepted 15 Japanese bombers being escorted toward Guadalcanal by 12 fighters from the carrier *Ryujo*. Marines broke this raid up before it got close. They downed six of the Zeros and ten bombers in what was VMF-223's first big success of the war. Captain Marion Carl splashed two bombers and a Zero, and two planes each were downed by Lieutenants Zennith A. Pond and Kenneth D. Frazier, and Marine Gunner Henry B. Hamilton:

This was a good day's work by the fighter pilots of VMF-223. It is necessary to remember that the Japanese Zero at this stage of the war was regarded with some of the awe in which the atomic bomb came to be held later. . . . The Cactus [Guadalcanal] fighters made a great contribution to the war by exploding the theory that the Zero was invincible; the Marines started the explosion on 24 August.²⁰

Three Marine pilots did not return from the action, and a fourth was shot down but managed to save himself by getting ashore at Tulagi. In plane strength, however, the Cactus Air Force (as the Guadalcanal fliers called their composite outfit) gained. This was the day, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, that the 11 SBD's came in

from the damaged *Enterprise*. At the time the ship was struck, Lieutenant Turner Caldwell, USN, was up with his "Flight 300," and, low on gas, he led his fliers to Guadalcanal where they more than paid for their keep until 27 September.

Meanwhile Admiral Fletcher's carrier planes located the enemy task force in the Eastern Solomons at about the same time Japanese planes spotted Fletcher. Like the Battle of Midway, the resulting action was an air-surface and air-air contest. Surface vessels neither sighted nor fired at each other.

The *Ryujo*, whose Zeros had fared so poorly with John Smith's F4F pilots, took repeated hits that finally put her out of control and left her hopelessly aflame. One enemy cruiser and a destroyer were sunk; a second cruiser was damaged; the *Chitose* sustained severe wounds but managed to limp away; and 90 Japanese planes were shot down. On the American side, 20 planes were lost and the damaged *Enterprise* lurched away to seek repair.

This action turned back the larger Japanese attack force, and Fletcher likewise withdrew. He expected to return next day and resume the attack, but by then the Japanese had moved out of range. The escorted transports with reinforcements for the late Colonel Ichiki continued to close the range, however, and early on 25 August SBD's from VMSB-232 and the *Enterprise* Flight 300 went up to find them. The Battle of the Eastern Solomons had postponed Tanaka's delivery of these reinforcements, but after that carrier battle was over the admiral headed his ships south again late on 24 August.

At 0600 on 25 August, Tanaka's force was some 150 miles north of Guadalcanal, and there the SBD's from Henderson

²⁰ *Marine Air History*, 81.

Field found him. The *Jintsu* shook under an exploding bomb that Lieutenant Lawrence Baldinus dropped just forward of her bridge, and Ensign Christian Fink of the *Enterprise* scored a hit on the transport *Kinryu Maru* amidships. Admiral Tanaka was knocked unconscious by the explosion on his flagship, and a number of crewmen were killed or injured. The ship did not list under the bow damage, however, and she still was seaworthy. When Tanaka recovered he transferred his flag to the destroyer *Kagero* and sent the *Jintsu* to Truk alone.²¹

Flames broke out on the *Kinryu Maru* which carried approximately 1,000 troops of the *Yokosuka 5th SNLF*, and the destroyer *Muzuki* went alongside to rescue survivors. At just that moment this ship became "one of the first Japanese warships to be hit by a B-17 since the war began"²² when these big planes from the 11th Bombardment Group at Espiritu Santo arrived to lend a hand to the Cactus fliers. The *Muzuki* sank at once. Another ship then moved in to rescue the survivors from this destroyer while two destroyer transports

went to the rescue of the men from the *Kinryu Maru*. These men were picked up just as the *Maru* also went to the bottom. Meanwhile another pass at the ships had resulted in light damage to the destroyer *Uzuki*, and Admiral Tanaka turned back for Rabaul. Many of the *SNLF* men had been lost, and his force was badly shaken and disordered:

My worst fear for this operation had come to be realized. Without the main combat unit, the *Yokosuka 5th Special Naval Landing Force*, it was clear that the remaining auxiliary unit of about 300 men would be of no use even if it did reach Guadalcanal without further mishap.²³

Thus had the 1st Marine Division gained some valuable time to prepare for the next Japanese attempt to dislodge its Lunga defense. With air support on Henderson Field and with a tenuous supply route established to the New Hebrides, the division's grip on Guadalcanal was much improved at month's end. But it still was a long way from being completely secure, especially now that Ichiki's act of *hara-kiri* had pointed up for the Japanese the impropriety of trying to dislodge the landing force with only 900 or 1,000 men.

²¹ *Tanaka Article*, I, 693.

²² *Marine Air History* 81. See also *Tanaka Article*, I, 694; *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 105.

²³ *Tanaka Article*, I, 694.

The Battle of the Ridge

General Vandegrift and his staff were aware that the defeat of the *Ichiki Force* left the division's position on the island only temporarily improved. Obviously the Japanese could be expected to mount larger and better planned attacks against the small Marine perimeter; air and naval activity at Guadalcanal indicated no waning enemy interest in the South Solomons area. A noon-hour visit from Rabaul bombers was an almost daily occurrence, and enemy warships and submarines entered Sealark Channel nearly every night to shell Henderson Field.

Although the Battle of the Eastern Solomons gave Allied shipping from Espiritu Santo an opportunity to increase the flow of supplies to the beleaguered Marines, the Lunga defenders still operated on a hand-to-mouth basis.

The Cactus Air Force performed beyond all proportion to its facilities and equipment, and the 3d Defense Battalion finally was able late in August to bring in the 5-inch guns of its two seacoast batteries; but there were not enough Marines on the island to enlarge the perimeter for an adequate defense. General Vandegrift believed that positions along 45 miles of Guadalcanal's north coast would have to be held before the Japanese could be restrained from landing and attacking Henderson Field and before air defenses would have sufficient room for deployment. The general did not have that kind of manpower.

Since Major John Smith and Lieutenant Colonel Mangrum arrived with their F4F's and SBD's on 20 August, the airfield had taken on a more proficient and permanent look. By the end of August a daily routine of scheduled patrol flights had been initiated. Four-plane fighter patrols flew from 0545 to 0830 each morning and from 1400 to 1830 each afternoon, and mixed fighter-bomber squadrons frequently made night searches for enemy shipping to the northwest. Cactus aviators flew cover for the Allied shipping to the island, and went up on intercept during the Japanese raids.

The U. S. fighters did well against the enemy bombers, but their only chance against the highly maneuverable Zero was to pair up in mutual support. In this way they could protect themselves when the Zeros came down to drive them away from the bombers. They found that the Grumman did have certain advantages over the Zero, however. It had great fire power, and it could stay in the air with more holes in it than the more flimsy Japanese fighter could endure. During the first ten days of Cactus operations, U. S. fliers shot down 56 Japanese planes at a cost of 11 of their own craft.

Marine engineers rigged a system of lights from captured Japanese equipment to outline the field for emergency night landings, and, when dump trucks and pneumatic tampers came in later, workers could fill a 500-kilogram-bomb crater in 30

minutes. Dump trucks were kept loaded with gravel and sand, and "flying squads" of engineers rushed out to repair any damage immediately after the departure of Japanese bombers.

But not even counting enemy action, Henderson personnel still had plenty of problems. An early method of fueling employed drums strung up in the rafters of partially built Japanese hangars, and even when gasoline trucks arrived later the fuel had to be hand pumped from drums to the trucks. There was no steel matting, and the field was completely at the mercy of the whimsical tropical weather:

Henderson Field was a bowl of black dust which fouled airplane engines or it was a quagmire of black mud which made the take-off resemble nothing more than a fly trying to rise from a runway of molasses.¹

When engineers and Seabees had no bomb craters to patch, they still had to fix up the field in the wake of the early SBD's which had hard-rubber tail wheels designed for landing on the sturdy decks of carriers. On the Henderson earth these wheels ". . . chewed up the runway like a plowshare."² The sorry condition of the field added serious operational losses to the troubles of the small Cactus force which was nearly always outnumbered in the air. Occasionally a plane was gripped so persistently by the mud that it failed to take off and crashed at the end of the runway; ruts and the beginnings of pot-holes were hazards on dry days, and on one foggy wet afternoon in early September a landing F4F crashed into a bulldozer.

But in spite of everything the installation grew and slowly improved, and this

was a period when American fighting men were thankful for small favors. On 20 August the transport *William Ward Burrows* came up from the New Hebrides with the forward echelon of MAG-23. All the men and some of the gear were put ashore, but then the ship scurried across Sealark Channel for Tulagi when the word came in that a Japanese cruiser force was expected that night. Near Tulagi the transport went aground and much of the equipment still on board had to be jettisoned to float her free.

Next day Colonel William J. Wallace, group commander, came up to Henderson with more planes: 19 F4F's of Major Robert E. Galer's VMF-224, and 12 SBD-3's of VMSB-231 commanded by Major Leo R. Smith. That brought the Cactus strength to 86 pilots and 64 planes, 10 of them Navy and three Army.

On 1 September the ground crews got more help. Five officers and 387 men of the 6th Naval Construction Battalion (Seabees) landed with two bulldozers. They would ". . . help make an airfield out of Henderson and . . . clear a short grassy strip a mile to the east called Fighter 1."³ But next day came one of the infamous Henderson disasters that always loomed as a threat to much of the backbreaking effort that had gone before.

With the frequent raids, fire was always a dangerous possibility, and a field fire brigade had been organized around two Japanese trucks which had been repaired by the 1st Marines. They got their baptism on 2 September when a bomb from a heavy Japanese raid hit an armed SBD parked at the edge of a coconut grove where ammunition was stored. The bomb could not be removed from the burning

¹ *Marine Air History*, 82.

² *Ibid.*, 83.

³ *Ibid.*, 84.



90MM ANTIAIRCRAFT GUNS of the 3d Defense Battalion point skyward at Henderson Field on alert against the attacks of Japanese bombers. (USMC 61608)



105MM HOWITZER of the 11th Marines nestles beneath the slope of a protecting ridge on Guadalcanal ready to go into action against the Japanese. (USMC 51832)

SBD, and when it exploded it spewed flaming gasoline in all directions. One 90mm shell dump was ignited, and the fire brigade could not do its best work with all the explosions that resulted. Several of the fire-fighters were injured, and the trucks seemed to be making little headway since they had to take turns dashing off to the Lunga River, the closest supply of water. If the fire expanded much more it would set off a chain reaction and all the ammunition in the area would be lost.

Had not the situation been so grim, some old hands might have been reminded of the Chinese fire drill of ancient Marine legend. The blaze was eventually brought under control, however, and the loss was serious but not critical. After this, large water tanks from coconut plantations were spotted around the ammunition dumps; but this fire proved to be the most serious of the campaign. Subsequent losses occurred in division dumps as a result of naval shelling at night. These losses were negligible since the ammunition by that time had been buried.

This bombing raid had arrived at 1135, and while the fire department below worked to save the ammunition dumps, Cactus fliers were up among the bombers. They shot down three of the twin-engined craft and four Zeroes without a single loss of their own.

On 3 September the command echelon of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing arrived. This group included Brigadier General Roy S. Geiger, commanding general of the wing; his chief of staff, Colonel Louis E. Woods; and Lieutenant Colonel John C. Munn, wing intelligence officer. Using the MAG-23 staff as his wing staff, Geiger established his command post near that of General Vandegrift. Liaison in the form of daily conferences between the two generals was established, and Kenneth H. Weir, now a lieutenant colonel, at last had

a well-organized air headquarters with which to deal as division air officer.⁴

Fueling and arming of the planes continued in a make-shift manner for some time, and as late as November bombs had to be manhandled. Radio communications likewise posed problems. Army and Navy receiving channels did not mesh, and the Army planes of the Cactus Force could not receive Navy traffic. Operations resolved this by employing the radio from a grounded Army P-400 alongside the Navy set and thereafter making simultaneous broadcasts over twin microphones. This was a big help, but communications still were far from satisfactory. Beyond 20 miles the planes could not depend on receiving the field, but the field could normally read the planes' messages from as far as 100 miles.

Since the fight against Ichiki, there had been little opportunity for close air support of ground troops, but Marines continued to plan for this sort of air-ground teamwork. Communications was the big problem here, too. At that stage of operations only visual signals were used, consisting mainly of colored panels which the ground troops had, but they left much to be desired. Planes now flew higher and faster than they had in the banana wars and maneuvers, and this made it more difficult for pilots to read the panel messages, even if they could catch a glimpse of the colored markings. And more often than not in Guadalcanal's thick jungle and tall grass, they could not even see them. Guadalcanal Marines had heard about colored smoke grenades which were being tested back in the States, and they thought these

⁴ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Weir's first look at the field had come on 8 August when he and the division engineer officer had estimated how much work they would have to add to the early Japanese efforts to make the strip usable.

might be helpful for air-ground signals. But what they really had their eyes out for were some radio sets. That seemed to be the only promising solution for air-ground coordination. Radios initially available to the division would not serve the purpose, and it would not be until October that Vandegrift could detail an officer and suitable radio equipment and personnel to train as "air forward observers" from each infantry regiment and thereby pioneer in what later became an important phase of Marine combat operations.

While Geiger built up his air arm, Vandegrift likewise added strength to the Lunga perimeter. With Tulagi quiet, he brought some of General Rupertus' troops across the channel to Guadalcanal. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines made the move on 21 August, and the 1st Raider Battalion and the 1st Parachute Battalion crossed to the Guadalcanal side on 31 August. In early September, when a detachment of the 5th Defense Battalion came ashore at Tulagi, a 90mm battery of the 3d Defense Battalion joined its parent organization in the Henderson Field area.

From all indications these additional troops would be needed. Aerial observation and native scouts piled up reports of Japanese landings on both sides of the perimeter, and staff officers estimated a build-up of some 200 or 300 well-equipped enemy troops near the village of Tasimboko some 18 miles east of Lunga Point. Native scouts placed the enemy strength much higher, but Marines suspected such counts to be exaggerated.

Patrolling continued in all sectors, and on 27 August the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel William E. Maxwell met a strong body of troops near the village of Kokumbona, west of the perimeter. The battalion had made an

amphibious landing without incident at about 0730, but later ran into the Japanese force dug into positions throughout a narrow coastal gorge. Maxwell was beyond artillery range of the perimeter, and although the 2d and 5th Battalions of the 11th Marines fired diversionary missions east of him in Matanikau village, the Japanese facing the infantry Marines seemed inclined for once to make a strong stand rather than to slink off into the brush as they had frequently done in other such engagements.

Faulty communications and other difficulties bogged the Marine attack, and Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell withdrew his force to comply with a portion of his patrol order which required him to return to the perimeter by nightfall. But the regimental commander, Colonel Hunt, ordered the battalion back into the fight, relieved Maxwell of command, and soon thereafter arrived on the scene himself. Major Milton V. O'Connell succeeded to command of the battalion, but the attack was not resumed until the predawn hours of the following morning. A few Japanese were killed, but most of them had withdrawn. The Marines retired to Matanikau village and later returned by water to the perimeter.

On 2 September two companies of the raider battalion patrolled Savo Island but found no enemy. Following this the raiders and parachutists, consolidated into a provisional battalion, moved into defensive positions on the south rim of the perimeter, inland from the airfield. While they dug in, Colonel Edson and his staff made plans for an amphibious raid to the east where the enemy build-up was reported around the Tasimboko area.

The landing was made just east of Tasimboko before dawn on 8 September,

and the raiders⁵ advanced west into the rear of the reported Japanese positions. At about 0630 planes of MAG-23 bombed and strafed the suspected strong point, and two destroyer transports, *Manley* and *McKean*, opened up on the area. At 0830 Edson made contact against light resistance, and his advance overran two artillery pieces. He still could not determine the strength of the enemy, but the force appeared to be withdrawing toward the village, and he requested that supporting dive bombers remain on station in the event that the enemy pocket could be localized for an air strike. General Vandegrift ordered ten planes to remain in continuous support and placed another squadron on call to Edson.

By 1045 the resistance had stiffened, and the raiders requested that more troops land to the west of the village and support their attack. Not wanting to weaken the perimeter, division replied that such a move was not feasible. Vandegrift suggested that the raiding force reembark and return to the perimeter if the Japanese proved too strong to handle. Edson remained, however, and 45 minutes later had overrun more artillery pieces as the battalion advanced slowly against a heavy volume of fire. The colonel estimated the enemy as about 1,000 well-armed and well-equipped troops, and the force now seemed inclined to make a stand. Portions of Edson's advance drew fire from field artillery at point-blank range.

Some of the raider units had lost internal contact during the stiffening battle, but these faults were corrected at about 1100, approximately the same time that

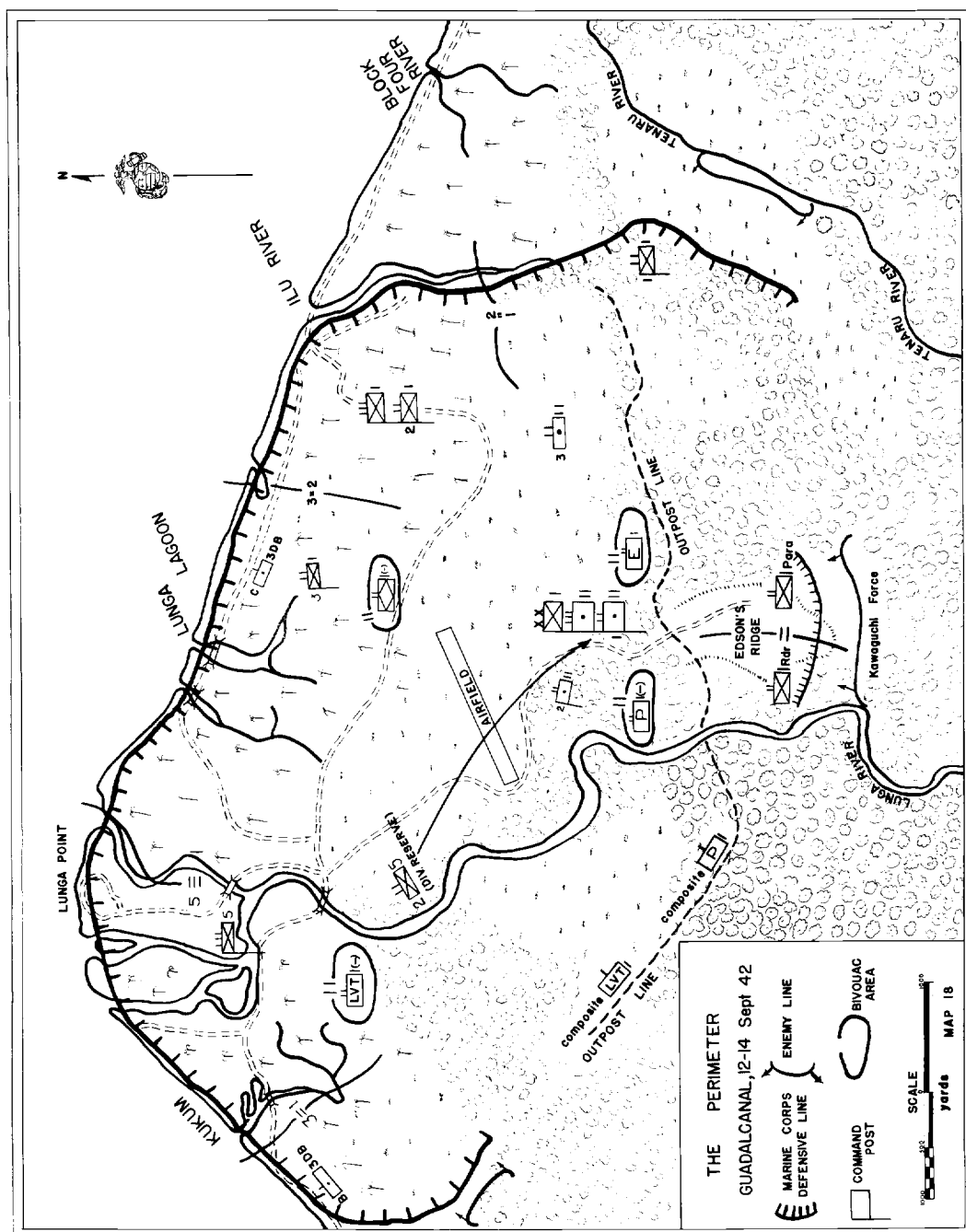
the parachute battalion reported to Edson, and the commander decided to make a coordinated attack against the firm opposition. The colonel called in a P-400 strafing attack and then followed this with an envelopment inland by his raiders while the parachutists protected his flank and rear. The assault carried the village, but again the Japanese had elected to break contact and prepare for an attack at a time and place of their own choosing.

The village was deserted, but the appearance of the abandoned encampment indicated that reports of native scouts had been most accurate. Edson estimated that some 4,000 Japanese had been in the vicinity until shortly before his attack, that his force had met only outposts and rear guards of a newly arrived unit which obviously was preparing a strong attack on Henderson Field. Twenty-seven Japanese had been killed. Marine casualties numbered two dead and six wounded.

Edson's estimate of the Japanese strength was a little low, but he was right about the enemy's intentions. Just as the 1st Marines had previously scouted elements of the *Ichiki Force* it later met at the mouth of the Ilu River, so Colonel Edson had located the gathering *Kawaguchi Force* his men would meet later in a bitter stand before the airfield.

Rabaul had kept Admiral Tanaka's reinforcement ships busy. The admiral had taken over the cruiser *Kinugasa* to replace his damaged *Jintsu*, and early on 29 August Admiral Mikawa had ordered Tanaka to begin transporting reinforcements by destroyer. The remnants of Ichiki's rear echelon would be taken down to Guadalcanal as would the *Kawaguchi Force*, due to arrive later that day from Truk on board the transport *Sado Maru*. Tanaka loaded supplies on board the ships of *De-*

⁵ There was a shortage of landing craft and the parachute battalion would not leave the perimeter until shortly after 0800.



stroyer Division 24, and put the troops of Ichiki's rear echelon on board two destroyer transports. Then he stood by for the arrival of Kawaguchi.

Kawaguchi's *35th Brigade*, a part of the *18th Division* in China, was built around Colonel Akinosuka Oka's *124th Infantry Regiment*. From China the unit had moved in December 1941 to Borneo. In March 1942 it moved to Cebu in the Philippines, in April to Mindanao, and in June to Palau. Alerted for a New Guinea operation that never came off, the force remained in the Palau Islands until late in August when it began to stage in echelons through Truk for the Rabaul area. When it arrived for this new mission it was formed up to include the rear echelon of the *2d Battalion, 28th Infantry (Ichiki Force)*, the *124th Infantry*, the *2d Battalion, 4th Infantry*, and units of artillery, engineer, signal, and antitank troops. In that form the *Kawaguchi Force* numbered more than 6,000 men.⁶

Admiral Tanaka had his destroyers all ready when Kawaguchi arrived. The admiral met immediately with the general to hurry things along, but he ran into difficulty at once. Kawaguchi was a barge man, and he did not care much for this idea of going down to Guadalcanal in destroyers. He had once moved his unit 500 miles by barges to make a distinguished landing on Borneo. Now he wanted to know how it would be if he went on down to Gizo Harbor just north of New Georgia on board his *Sado Maru*, and then transferred to barges for the remainder of the trip and for the landing at Guadalcanal. Kawaguchi's subordinate officers nodded agreement to this idea. They were barge

men, too. The impatient Tanaka referred this dispute to Mikawa of the *Eighth Fleet* and Hyakutake of the *Seventeenth Army*. These officers prevailed upon Kawaguchi to temporarily curb his warm regard for barges. He would make all of the trip on Tanaka's destroyers, and land on Guadalcanal from them, besides.⁷

For the build-up on Guadalcanal, Kawaguchi split his command. The general would land in the Tasimboko area with the Ichiki rear echelon and the *1st* and *3d Battalions, 124th Infantry Regiment*. Colonel Oka would land with the remainder of the force—the *2d Battalion, 124th Infantry*—west of Lunga Point near Kokumbona. Each of the two forces was reinforced by a share of the artillery, engineers, and other special troops. There was only one hitch in the reinforcement efforts, even if Kawaguchi might have been uneasy without a barge under him, but this bobble had no serious over-all results. Captain Yonosuke Murakami, commanding *Destroyer Squadron 24*, was to clear the way for the landings by going down The Slot on the night of 29 August to attack a U. S. task force which was reported to be off Lunga Point. Instead, Murakami came steaming back up The Slot for the comfort of the Shortlands. The night sky around Guadalcanal, he explained, was too full of a bright moon and U. S. aircraft. "He was transferred shortly to the homeland," Tanaka reported later.⁸ The elements of the *Kawaguchi Force* landed during the nights of 30 and 31 August, at about midnight in both cases.

In spite of the fact that the commanders were separated by a distance of some 30 miles, Kawaguchi planned a difficult

⁶ 17th Army Ops, I, cited in Miller, *Guadalcanal*, 114.

⁷ Tanaka Article, I, 695, 697.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 696.

maneuver that proposed to strike the Lunga perimeter in a three-jawed envelopment from the west, south, and southeast. It was to be a coordinated attack **with air and naval support**. To the normal problems inherent in such an involved plan, Kawaguchi imposed upon his force the additional task of cutting a trail over the steep jungle-covered ridges and gorges from the Tasimboko area to a point south of Henderson Field. The jungle trail, planned as a route which would enable the Japanese to escape observation, was begun about 2 September by Kawaguchi's engineers. Infantry, artillery, and other units followed the engineers along this hand-hewn jungle route toward their lines of departure for the attack against the Marines.

THE BATTLE OF THE RIDGE

Kawaguchi's fade-out into the jungle was successful. He was not spotted by Marines again until he was ready to attack, but it soon became apparent to the Lunga defenders that he would have imposing support from Rabaul. Far-ranging intelligence sources reported a Japanese naval build-up in the Truk and Palau areas and greatly increased air activity around the Bismarck Archipelago.

"The situation as I view it is very critical," Admiral Ghormley messaged Nimitz.⁹ "Our transportation problem increases steadily as Japs perfect their blockade methods." Japanese pounding of Guadalcanal picked up; the defenders clearly were being softened up for a big attack, and while the South Pacific scurried to get them more planes the men at Lunga hoped that the field would stay dry for the important day.

⁹ Quoted in *Marine Air History*, 88-89.

On 11 September, the pace of the attacks quickened. Twenty-six bombers and eight Zeros came over at 1210 to pock the field, kill 11 Marines, and wound 17 others, and destroy one P-400 parked beside the strip; and a heavy cruiser and two destroyers were spotted steaming south about 100 miles to the northeast. But on the same day the Cactus Air Force added to its strength. At 1620 a flight of 24 F4F's that had been idle since their carrier *Saratoga* had been torpedoed on 31 August came up to Henderson from Espiritu Santo under the command of Lieutenant Commander Leroy C. Simpler. Before noon the next day (12 September) Simpler's men got their chance to learn Cactus operations. Twenty-one of them went up with 11 "old" Cactus fliers to shoot down 12 bombers and three fighters out of a 42-plane Japanese strike that came over at 1100.

Meanwhile patrols from the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines began to encounter frequent opposition east and southeast of the perimeter. Native scouts brought word of large bodies of troops that clearly were not wandering remnants of Ichiki's action. The troops had an air of purpose and direction apparent even to the local natives who began to flee from their villages to the Marine perimeter. By 10 September native reports indicated that the enemy was less than five miles east of the perimeter and that he was cutting a road to the south.

The perimeter by this time had been improved and strengthened. The 1st Marines right (east) flank was refused for some 4,000 yards inland from the mouth of the Ilu, and on the west the 5th Marines, with a strong reserve in the form of its 2d Battalion just over from Tulagi, refused

its flank inland for approximately half that distance. The space inland between these flanks still posed a serious problem, but it had been partially solved by the establishment of well-prepared strong points and outposts. (See Map 18)

Troops from the 1st Amphibian Tractor and Pioneer Battalions maintained positions south (inland) of the 5th Marines sector west of the Lunga, while east of the Lunga a 4,000-yard outpost line was maintained by the 1st Marines, artillerymen, the engineer battalion, the bulk of the pioneer battalion, and the raider-parachute battalion. General Vandegrift had ordered the raiders and parachutists out of division reserve to augment this line by preparing positions on a long low ridge that extended south of Henderson Field and parallel to the Lunga River. The thousand-yard-long ridge was but a mile south of the airfield and, unless well defended, offered the Japanese an inviting avenue of approach to the field.

The pioneer battalion (minus its company west of the Lunga) held positions just south of Henderson Field between the Lunga and the north spur of the ridge occupied by Edson's force. Farther to the east—and across the ridge spur from the pioneers—was the area of the engineer battalion. Between the two positions was the division command post which recently had been moved from its former, bomb-pocked position near the airfield.

On the 12th, the same day the *Saratoga* fliers went into business with the Cactus circus, Edson and his executive officers walked out on their ridge to decide on a location for defenses. The officers drew small-arms fire from the jungles to the south, and Edson called up his troops to dig in across the southernmost knoll on the

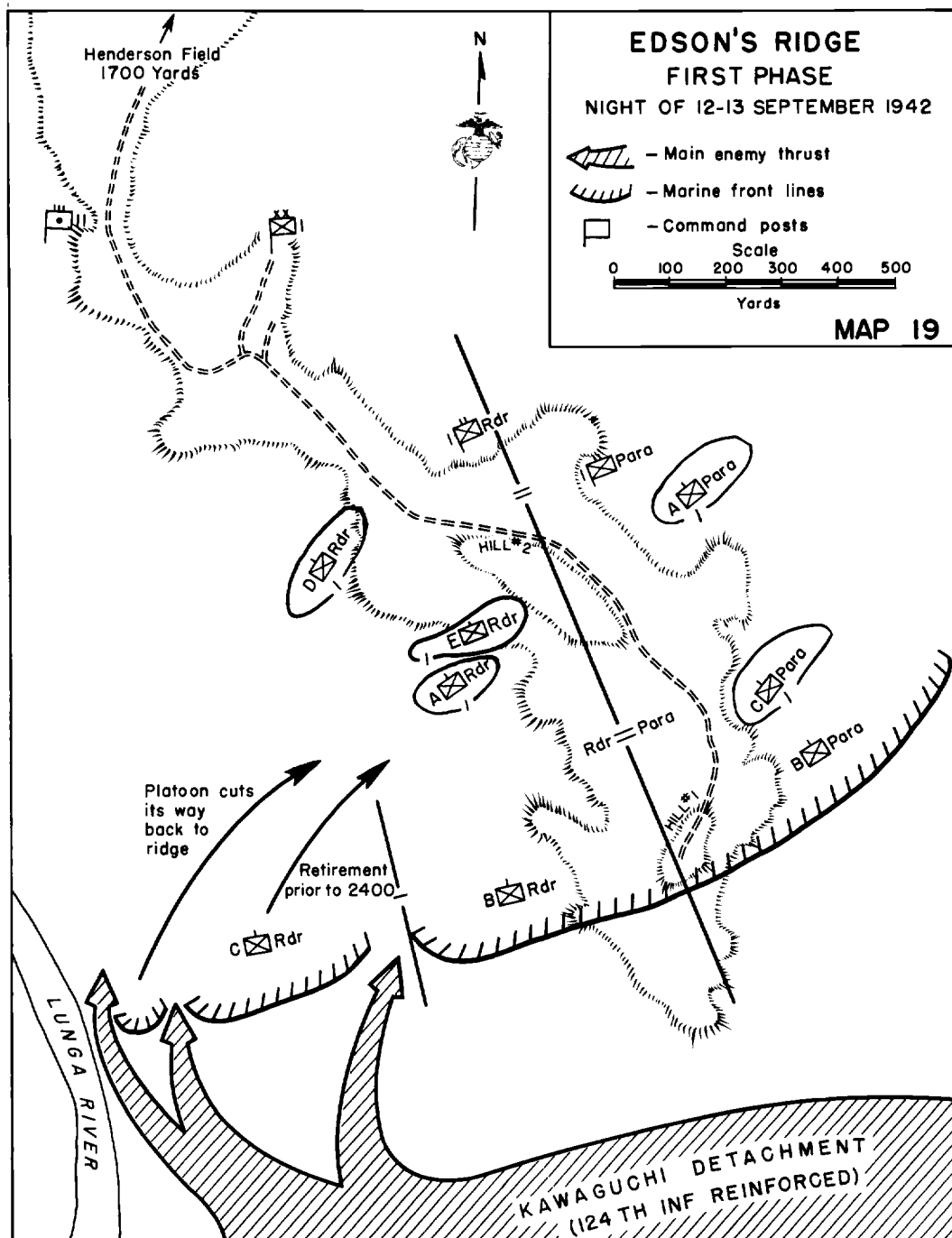
ridge. This was forward of the flanks of engineers on his left (east) and the pioneers on his right, but Edson wanted to hold all the ground he could and to launch an attack against the enemy the next day.

At about 2100 that night a Japanese light cruiser and three destroyers entered Sealark Channel to shell the airfield, and at about the same time the enemy ground force probed lightly at the raider-parachute force on the ridge. Fighting was sporadic all along the line, and although one desultory Japanese attack actually made a slight penetration of the Marine line, the enemy made no attempt to consolidate or expand this gain.

Early the next morning (the 13th) Edson launched his counteroffensive, but he found the enemy too strong and well-prepared to be thrown back. In the afternoon the Marine officer withdrew his exhausted men north of the positions they had held the previous night and established a stronger line on a higher portion of the ridge closer to the engineers and pioneers to his left and right rear. On the right, in the jungle between the ridge and the Lunga, a sketchy contact was made with the pioneer battalion; on the left (east) the raider-parachute flank dangled open. (See Map 19)

While Edson's force sweated under the hot sun on the grassy ridge, Henderson Field was having more than its share of action. The Japanese raids started at 0950, came back at 1300 and again at 1730. The mixed Guadalcanal force shot down 11 of the enemy planes during the day while losing five of their own number. But again the U. S. air strength grew.

Navy pilots from the *Hornet* and *Wasp* brought in 18 F4F's, and in the afternoon more *Saratoga* fliers and planes came up



from Espiritu Santo. Nimitz and Ghormley were doing all they could to bolster the Solomons toe hold against the Japanese attack that was coming. Later in the day Lieutenant Commander Louis J. Kirn brought in a flight of 12 SBD's of VS-3 and the field also got its first torpedo planes when Lieutenant Harold H. Larsen, USN, flew in leading six TBF's of VT-8.¹⁰ But while the Henderson flying force gained by 60 planes during the period of 11-13 September, Rabaul's air power jumped an additional 140 planes on 12 September alone.

Taking periodic cover from sniping and bombing raids, Edson's men continued to dig in for one more night on the ridge; on the morning of the 14th they were to be relieved by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. But it looked as if the night would be the worst they had seen yet; scouting planes spotted seven destroyers coming down The Slot, evidently to add their bombardment to the ground attack that appeared shaping up in the jungle to the south.

During the afternoon the reserve battalion (2/5) moved to an assembly area east of the Lunga and between the airfield and Edson's Ridge, and officers of this battalion had gone forward to Edson's lines to look over the area they would control the following day. The 105mm howitzers of the 5th Battalion, 11th Marines lay in direct support of the Edson force, and elements of the special weapons battalion had an observation post on the ridge. The Guadalcanal defense was as ready as it could get.

¹⁰ After this day account-keeping pretty well broke down. Records defy determination of who flew from Cactus on any given day. In the press of fighting, often with "staff" officers in the air as much as anybody else, administration and office work were marked by extreme casualness.

Edson's disposition placed his two parachute companies on the exposed left flank and tied them in on the right with raider Company B which held the ridge knoll in the center of the Marine line. Company A of the raiders extended down the west slope of the ridge toward the Lunga and to the makeshift contact with the pioneers. Raider Company C, on a high knoll to the north (rear) of Company B, was Edson's reserve.

At sunset units were organized in small combat groups of about platoon strength disposed at intervals along the main line of resistance. There were open fields of fire only in the center of the position where the MLR crossed the grassy ridge, but even here the abrupt slopes and broken ground made coordination of fires difficult. In the last hours of daylight the troops improved their foxholes and the fields of fire, but the resulting positions were neither continuous nor complete.

In the first hours of darkness, Louie the Louse, or Washing-Machine Charley,¹¹ chugged over to drop his inconsistent scattering of bombs, and about 2100 he let go a flare that hung over the field as a registration point for the destroyer task force that now opened up from Sealark Channel.

As if in answer, a flare went up from the troops south of Edson, and without artillery preparation Kawaguchi drove a two-battalion attack against the center and right of the raider-parachute line. Com-

¹¹ Familiar but unaffectionate names by which Guadalcanal defenders identified the nuisance raiders that droned around almost nightly. Technically, "Charlie" was a twin-engine night bomber from Rabaul, "Louie" a cruiser float plane who signalled to the bombardment ships. But the harassed Marines used the names interchangeably.

pany B's central sector on the high knoll caught most of this first assault and turned it back, but the other attack column found an opening to the west and came through to cut off and envelop Company B's right platoon. While the Japanese drove through this gap between Companies A and B, the isolated platoon fought its way back along 250 yards of the ridge to join Company C on the knoll to the north. Still engaged and nearly overpowered, Company B refused its right flank along the ridge's west slopes. (See Map 20)

Edson had been calling in fire from 5/11's howitzers since the beginning of the attack, and as the Japanese continued to hammer at his men the colonel directed the artillery closer and closer until it was falling within 200 yards of the Company B lines. But still the Japanese came on, and by 2200 Edson estimated that the two understrength parachute companies and Company B (less the withdrawn platoon) were opposed by at least two enemy battalions attacking in full force.

Japanese infiltration parties were taking over some of the Company B foxholes, communication lines were cut throughout the area, and the Japanese now began to drum the ridge with heavy mortar fire. Following a violent barrage at 2230, the Japanese attack shifted to the east where it struck the thin flank held by the parachute troops. Screaming in English, "Gas attack! Gas attack!", the Japanese came out of the jungle through a smoke screen and drove the parachutists back along the ridge to expose the left flank of Company B.

This left the B Company raiders, now cut to approximately 60 men, exposed on both flanks as well as their front, and Edson called for them to pull back to a last-ditch stand with Company C. Com-

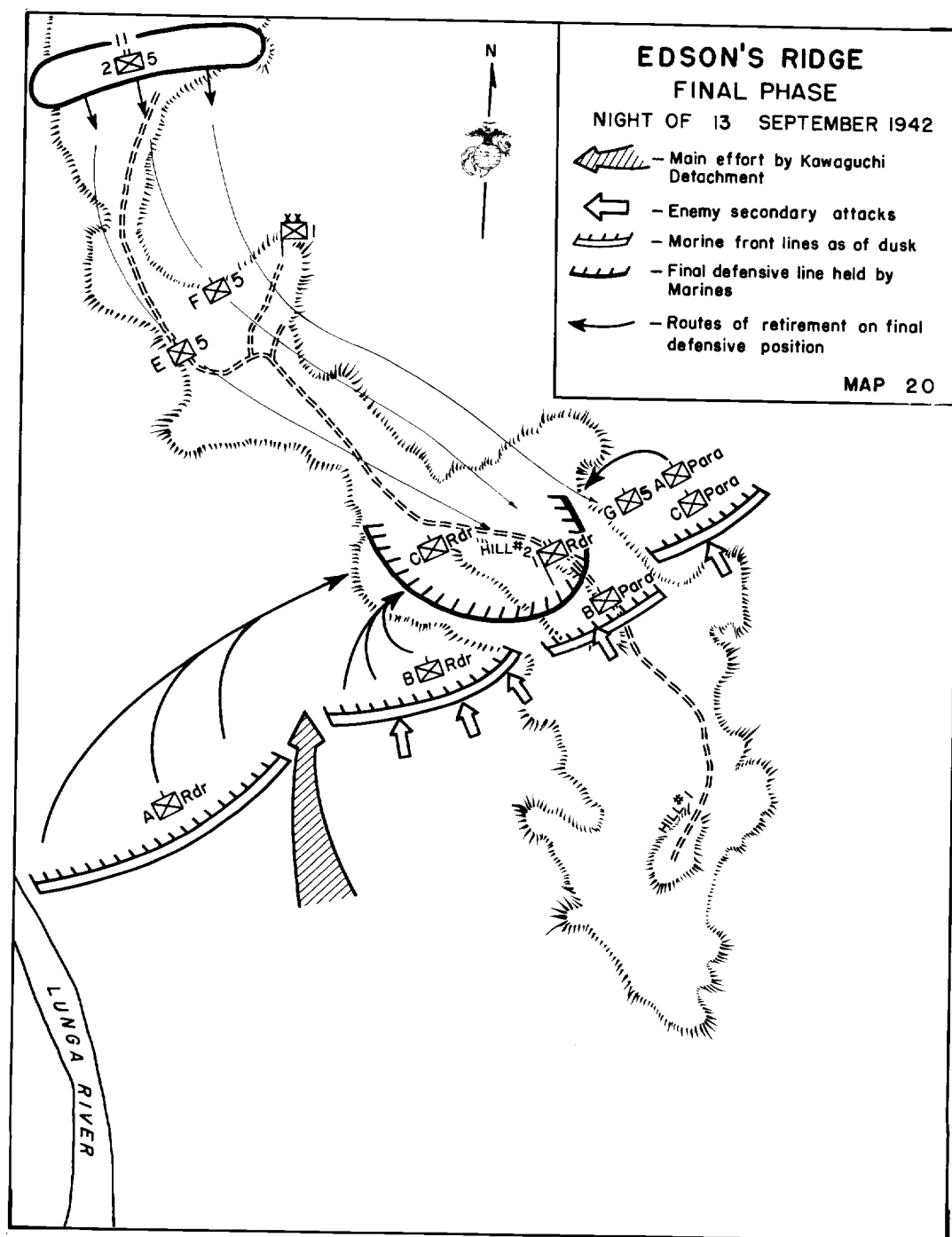
pany A would join the force there, and Edson ordered his men to hold at all costs. It was the last dominating terrain feature south of the airfield.

Screening the withdrawal of the two companies with artillery fire, Edson collected his men as they filtered back and built them up in what he hoped would be a line strong enough to make the final stand. The colonel and his officers ironed out the confusion of setting in the new defense in darkness and under fire while holding off repeated Japanese assaults. In all, the enemy struck more than a dozen times throughout the night, the Kawaguchi men grinding themselves into the fire from Marine artillery, mortars, machine guns, and rifles in vain attempts to dislodge Edson from his final knoll of Bloody Ridge.¹² Japanese flares "telegraphed" each attack, providing the 11th Marines gunners with reference points for their all-night firing in which they expended 1,992 rounds of 105mm projectiles, some at ranges as short as 1,600 yards.

At 0400, with the Japanese attacks still in progress, companies of reserve battalion 2/5 began to move singly through the darkness and into positions on the raider-parachute left flank. Darkness and uncertainty about Edson's new location brought confusion to this reinforcement effort, but the companies succeeded in gaining positions from which they aided in standing off the final Japanese attacks.

While the action on the ridge was in progress, another Japanese unit (possibly the Ichiki rear echelon) struck farther to the east where the right flank of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines lay exposed near the Ilu River inland. Striking with a

¹² The name, used interchangeably with "Edson's Ridge," was employed after the battle, to identify this terrain feature.



force of about two reinforced companies, the Japanese engaged the Marines in a night-long fire fight but failed to penetrate the line.

In another, lesser action of the night a patrol of some 30 Japanese, evidently from the force that penetrated Edson, wandered into a thin line of Company C, 1st Engineers in the area east of the division CP and near 5/11's Headquarters and Service Battery south of the airfield. The line had been thinned earlier in the night when Company A of the engineers had been called back to aid the CP defense, and the Japanese patrol which struck at 0530 succeeded in taking two left flank machine-gun positions before headquarters and service artillerymen came up to bolster the line and help evacuate wounded. The Japanese heckled the line for the short time remaining until daylight, then retired into the jungle. Four engineers were killed and 14 were wounded. Ten Japanese bodies were buried in the area.

Also by daylight (14 September) the attacks on Edson's Ridge and the 3/1 line had dwindled to sporadic sniping, and in the Edson Ridge sector the disorganized Japanese were bombed and strafed into retreat by three P-400's from Henderson Field. Survivors remaining near the ridge were hunted down and killed.

After this the only enemy still in action was a force of about battalion strength which fired across the Ilu plain some distance east of Bloody Ridge and harassed the Marines of 3/1 (Lieutenant Colonel William N. McKelvy, Jr.) who held that portion of the Marine line. Tanks were called up against this enemy force, and after a hasty reconnaissance six of these vehicles moved forward without infantry support toward the Japanese line in the fringe of jungle by the Tenaru. Two

tanks were hit almost at once by a Japanese antitank gun. Another tank charged across the plain and over a grass hut only to plunge down a 30-foot bank into the Tenaru; all four crew members were killed. A fourth tank was hit by this antitank gun shortly after this, the fifth tank returned to the infantry lines, and the sixth tank was stopped by a wrecked track 50 yards in front of the Japanese gun. The men in this tank bailed out and returned to the infantry position. The tank attack had to be chalked off as a costly failure, but the Japanese caused little trouble in the area after this. A desultory fire fight continued across the plain until 16 September when the enemy withdrew.

Tactically the entire *Kawaguchi Force* could be scratched. About 400 of the Ichiki rear echelon subsequently reached Koli Point as did some troops of the *2d Battalion, 4th Infantry*, but these were hardly more than stragglers. The remainder of the force—the larger element which had struck Edson's Ridge—reduced itself to a rabble while cutting a tortuous jungle trail over the southern slopes of Mount Austen, across the up-country Matanikau territory, and finally to Kokumbona. Wounded died along the route and equipment was abandoned by the weakened, exhausted survivors.

The Marines had turned back a serious threat to their precarious Guadalcanal position, but again a part of the thanks could go to Japanese bungling—on the battlefield as well as in planning at higher echelons. Although Kawaguchi salvaged enough pride to spare himself the *hara-kiri* fate of Colonel Ichiki, he still was only a slightly stronger boy whom Tokyo and Rabaul hopefully had sent away on a man's job.



RAIDERS' RIDGE looks calm in this after-action shot, but it was the scene of a violent and bloody fight crucial to the defense of the perimeter. (USMC 50007)



MARINES OF THE 2D RAIDER BATTALION land at Aola Bay, starting point of their month-long operations behind the enemy lines east of the perimeter. (USMC 51359)

Action Along the Matanikau

Retreat of the *Kawaguchi Force* promised the Marines of the Lunga perimeter another breathing spell from ground attacks, but there was no time for relaxation or relief from concern about the future. Air and naval strikes continued to pound the Henderson Field defenders, and aerial reports of a continued Japanese build-up at Rabaul forecast additional attempts to retake the Guadalcanal area. Patrolling schedules were stepped up; it was disquieting to know that both the *Ichiki* and *Kawaguchi Forces* had landed on the island and moved into attack positions without the Marines once being completely sure of their exact locations.

At the conclusion of the Battle of the Ridge on 14 September, the Marines had been ashore for 38 days without receiving either reinforcements or additional ammunition. For most of this period the men could be fed only two meals a day, and part of this food came from captured Japanese supplies. Malaria was beginning to add its toll to battle casualties, and although defensive emplacements were continually improved, the Marine force was wearing itself down while the Japanese ground strength continued to mount in staging areas in the Bismarcks.

In these lean early days in the Pacific, the problem of new strength for the Guadalcanal effort was a thorny one. The Solomon Islands position was merely a salient, and still not a strong one, which made a questionable contribution to the

safety of other Allied positions farther to the south. So these areas could not be stripped of defenders, and even if some spare troops could be found there still was another operation slated. From the first, the plan for this initial Allied offensive in the Pacific had included an occupation of Ndeni Island in the Santa Cruz group southeast of the Solomons.

The 2d Marines first had been scheduled for this job, but Vandegrift had been allowed to keep this regiment when the opposition became so bitter on Tulagi. Later the general requested that his division's third organic infantry regiment, the 7th Marines, come over from its Samoan garrison duty with its supporting artillery, the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. But Admiral Turner demurred; he still saw a need for the Ndeni operation, and the reinforced 7th Marines was the only amphibious force readily available for such an undertaking. On 20 August the admiral published his Ndeni plan, and on 4 September the 7th Marines with its artillery and part of the 5th Defense Battalion sailed from Samoa for Espiritu Santo.¹

¹Turner and Vandegrift often disagreed on conduct of the Guadalcanal operation ashore and on progress of the Solomon Islands action in general. Turner found fault with Vandegrift's perimeter concept of defense. His idea was to disperse the Marines along the Guadalcanal coast and set them upon the task of mopping up the remaining Japanese.

But by 9 September, with the 7th Marines' convoy still en route, Turner agreed with Vandegrift's August request for control of this infantry regiment, and he requested Admiral Ghormley's permission to divert the regiment from the Ndeni operation. The issue still was not won for the Marine general, however. Turner believed this fresh unit should set up coastal strong points outside the Lunga perimeter, while Vandegrift held that a reinforcement of his perimeter was the more pressing need. Turner relayed this question to Ghormley on 12 September, the same day the 7th Marines arrived in the New Hebrides, and Ghormley next day ordered the reinforced regiment to move as soon as possible to the Guadalcanal perimeter.

After unloading the 5th Defense Battalion units at Espiritu Santo, the ships bearing the infantry regiment and the artillery battalion departed for Guadalcanal on 14 September, the same day that the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines was brought across Sealark Channel from Tulagi. Operating with three cruisers plus the destroyers and mine sweepers of the newly-formed Task Force 65, the transports spent four days at sea skirting enemy naval forces in the Solomons waters. The convoy finally anchored off Kukum early in the morning of 18 September.

The trip cost the Navy dearly. Carriers *Hornet* and *Wasp*, then the only flattops operational in the entire South Pacific (both the *Saratoga* and the *Enterprise* were under repair) ranged southeast of the Solomons with other escort support for the convoy, and the Japanese had just sown the area with a division of submariners. The *Wasp* caught two torpedoes, burned and sank; the battleship

North Carolina was damaged as was the destroyer *O'Brien*, which later broke in two and went down while heading back to the U. S. following temporary repairs.

But for Henderson Field there was advantage even from such grim disasters as this; pilots and planes that otherwise would have been flying from their carriers could now come up to give the Cactus Force a hand. On 18 September six Navy TBF's arrived in the Lunga area, and on 28 September 10 more planes, some SBD's and the other TBF's, flew in. Although enemy raids dropped off somewhat after the defeat of the *Kawaguchi Force*, operational losses still drained Geiger's air power, and such reinforcement managed only to keep the Cactus Force at a 50-to-70-plane level, but for this Lunga was most thankful.

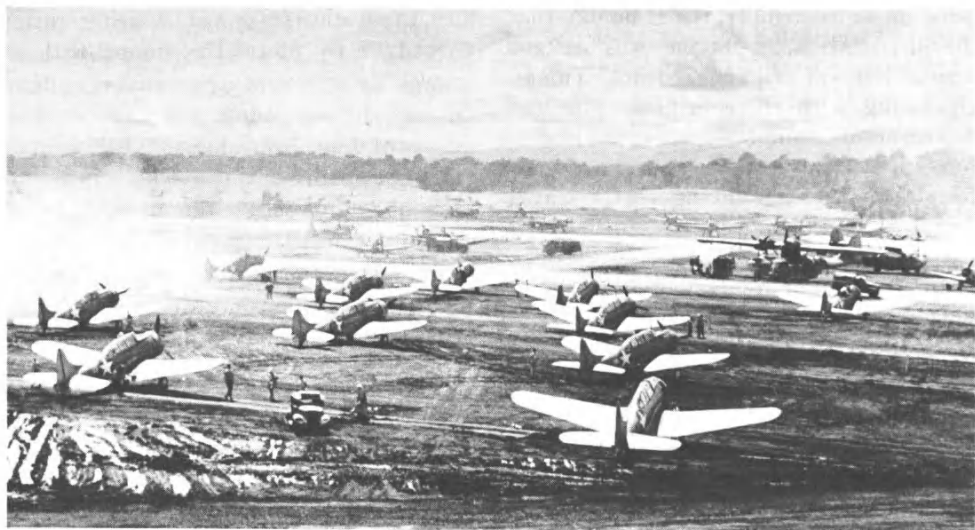
September 18th was a red-letter day for the Guadalcanal defenders. While the reinforced 7th Marines unloaded its 4,262 men, three other transports which were not part of TF 65 entered the channel with an emergency shipment of aviation gasoline. In all, this shipping put ashore 3,823 drums of fuel, 147 vehicles, 1,012 tons of rations, 90 per cent of the 7th Marines supplies of engineering equipment, 82.5 per cent of the organizational equipment, and nearly all of the ammunition.² Turner's force then took on board the 1st Parachute Battalion, 162 American wounded, and eight Japanese prisoners and departed for Espiritu Santo at 1800.

After this successful unloading, men on Guadalcanal began to draw more adequate

²This was the first ammunition Marines had received since the landing. It included about 10 units of fire with additional hand grenades and 81mm mortar shells. *Final Rept*, Phase V, Annex Z, 10.



THE PAGODA AT HENDERSON FIELD, headquarters of Cactus Air Force flyers throughout the first months of operations from the captured airfield. (USMC 50921)



CACTUS AIR FORCE spreads in all its variety across Henderson Field during a lull in the battle; in the foreground are Marine scout-bombers. (USMC 108580)

rations, and General Vandegrift was able to adopt new defensive concepts for his force of some 19,200 men now at Lunga. Local air power made a counterlanding less likely, and the attack pattern set by Ichiki and Kawaguchi indicated that more attention should be given to the inland rim of the perimeter. On 19 September, Vandegrift's Operational Plan 11-42 provided for this new concept by dividing the defenses into new sectors with increased all-around strength.

Relieving special troops such as the engineers and pioneers, infantry battalions filled the yawning gaps that previously had existed south of the airfield and along the southern portions of the new inland sectors. The pioneers, engineers, and the amphibian tractor personnel now were able to perform their normal functions during the daylight hours and at night bolster the beach defenses where fewer men were needed. Each infantry regiment maintained a one-battalion reserve, one or all of which could be made available as a division reserve if necessary.³

Gaps still existed in the perimeter. Generally the lines followed the high ground of the ridges, but intervening stretches of low jungle often could not be occupied in mutually supporting positions. Barbed wire had become available in in-

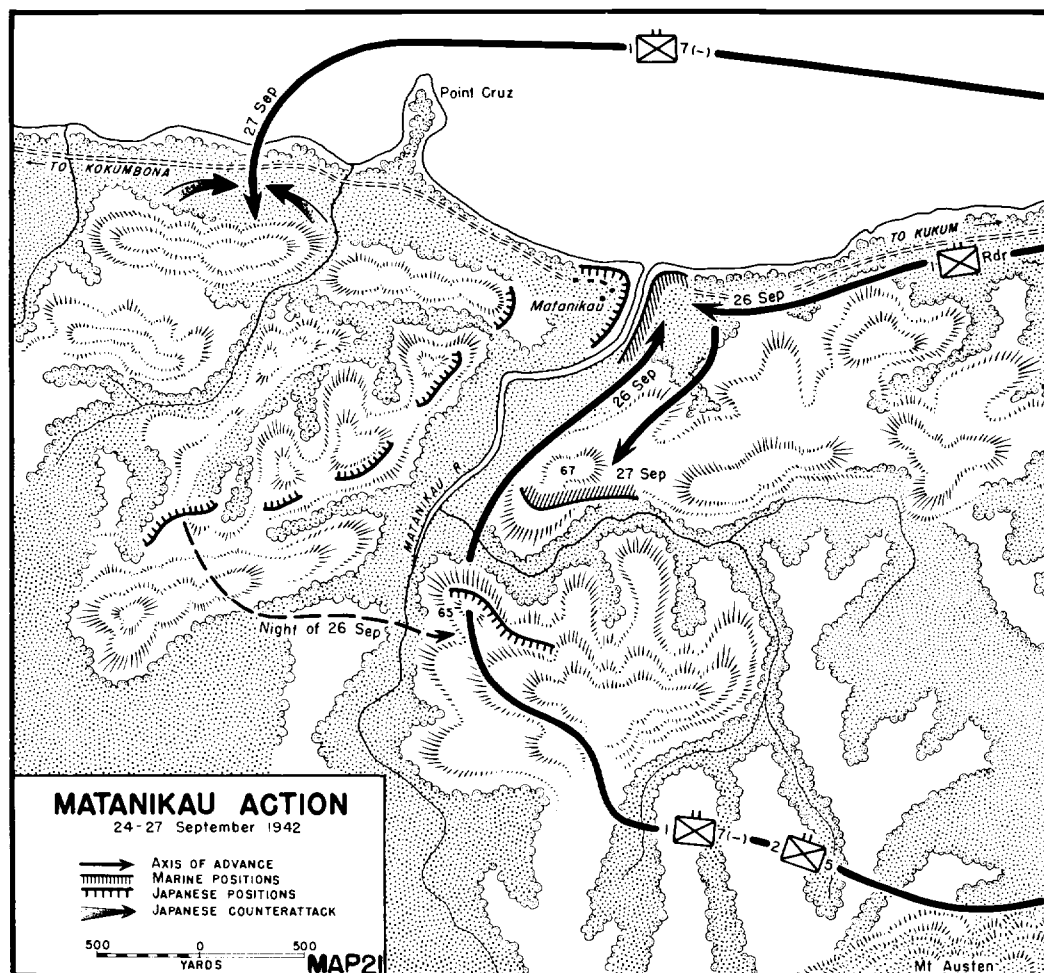
creasing quantity, and in most sectors double apron fences stretched across the ground in front of infantry positions of foxholes and logged and sand-bagged machine-gun emplacements. Colonel Robert H. Pepper's 3d Defense Battalion, with the 1st Special Weapons Battalion attached, retained responsibility for antiaircraft and beach defense, and Colonel Pedro A. del Valle's 11th Marines, bolstered by its 1st Battalion, remained in a central position supporting all sectors.

The 1st Marines retained responsibility for the east side of the perimeter, from an area near the mouth of the Ilu River inland to a point beyond the former right flank where McKelvy's battalion had fought the Japanese across the grassy plain. The fresh troops of the 7th Marines joined the 1st Marines at that point and extended across Edson's Ridge to the Lunga River. Beyond that river the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines built up a line that tied in on the right to the positions of the 5th Marines, and this latter regiment closed the perimeter with its right flank which connected with the left flank of the 3d Defense Battalion at the beach.

Tentative plans in the reorganization also included extending the perimeter with strong points of one- or two-battalion strength to the mouth of the Matanikau on the west and the Tenaru on the east. Such positions would take advantage of the natural defensive potential of the two rivers and aid the Marines in blocking Japanese movements in strength toward the main battle positions. These strong outposts were not established at this time, however. (See Map 21)

The first order of business seemed to require aggressive attention to the west.

³ All large trucks were called in to a division pool each night to stand by in case a division reserve had to be trucked quickly into action. Although many additional vehicles had been landed on the day the 7th Marines arrived, the division still was critically short of motor transport. The supply of large trucks never topped a bare 30 per cent of the allowance. In rear areas there was a mistaken idea that one-and-a-half ton and larger trucks could not be used on Guadalcanal. *Ibid.*, 1.



Patrol actions had confirmed intelligence estimates that a strong enemy force was operating from the Matanikau village area on the west bank of the river, but that from the southeast or east there seemed little danger of an attack. With the Henderson Field side of the Lunga perimeter thus reasonably safe from an attack in force, the division planned a series of actions to clear the Matanikau sector. Japanese troops there included elements from the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 2d Divi-

sion, and other personnel of the *Kawaguchi Force*. The 4th Infantry had been reinforced by new Japanese landings of mid-September.

The first action against this enemy force sent Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines into the Mount Austen area on 23 September. The Marines were to cross the Matanikau upstream and patrol between that river and the village of Kokumbona. The action was to be completed by 26 September at which time

the 1st Raider Battalion⁴ was to advance along the coast to Kokumbona where a permanent patrol base was to be established.

After passing through the perimeter on 23 September, Puller's battalion next day surprised a Japanese force bivouacked on the Mount Austen slopes, and scattered the enemy in a brief clash that ended shortly after nightfall. The action cost Puller 7 killed and 25 wounded, and the commander requested air support for a continuation of his attack the next day (25 September) and stretchers for 18 of his wounded men.

Realizing that a prompt evacuation of 18 stretcher cases over the rugged terrain would take at least 100 able-bodied men, General Vandegrift sent Lieutenant Colonel Rosecrans' 2d Battalion, 5th Marines out to reinforce Puller. With this new strength to back him up, Puller sent a two-company carrying and security force back with the wounded and pushed on toward the Matanikau.

The general's 24 September communications with Puller also gave the colonel the prerogative of altering the original patrol plan so that he could conform to the termination date of 26 September. Accordingly, when 1/7 and 2/5 reached the Matanikau on 26 September they did not cross but patrolled northward along the east bank toward the coast.

At about 1400 the two battalions reached the mouth of the river and there began to draw fire from strong Japanese positions in ridges on the west bank. Companies E and G of 2/5 attempted to force a crossing but were repulsed, and soon were pinned

down by fire from automatic weapons. Puller called in artillery and air, but the enemy positions remained active. By 1600 the combined forces of Puller and Rosecrans had sustained 25 casualties, and the action was broken off while the Marines strengthened their positions for the night.

Meanwhile the raider battalion, on its way to establish the patrol base at Kokumbona, had reached the vicinity of the fire fight, and division directed Griffith to join with 1/7 and 2/5 and to prepare for a renewal of the attack next day. With this large provisional group now formed, Vandegrift sent Colonel Edson up to take command. Puller would act as executive officer. Edson's plan for the coordinated attack next day (27 September) called for the raiders to move some 2,000 yards inland, cross the Matanikau, and envelop the enemy right and rear while 1/7 supported by fire and 2/5 struck frontally across the river near its mouth.

The attack began early on 27 September, but failed to gain. Marines of 2/5 could not force a crossing, and the raiders' inland maneuver stopped short when Griffith's battalion encountered a Japanese force which had crossed the river during the night to set up strong positions on high ground some 1,500 yards south of the beach. First fire from mortars and automatic weapons wounded Griffith and killed his executive officer, Major Kenneth D. Bailey, one of the heroes of the Battle of the Ridge.

A raider message reporting this action unfortunately was confusing, and from it Edson concluded that the battalion had succeeded in gaining the enemy right flank beyond the river and that the fight was in progress there. Thus misinformed, the colonel ordered the raider battalion and

⁴ Now commanded by LtCol Samuel B. Griffith, II. Edson, the former commander, had recently advanced to the rank of colonel to take over the 5th Marines on 21 September. Edson succeeded Col Leroy P. Hunt who had departed for the U. S.

2/5 to resume their attacks at 1330 while the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (less Company C) made an amphibious envelopment west of Point Cruz to strike the Japanese Matanikau line from the rear.

Under the command of Major Otho Rogers, the 1/7 troops left Kukum in landing craft just as a strong bombing raid came over from Rabaul. The division command post took heavy hits which wrecked communications, and the destroyer *Ballard*, supporting the landing, had to slight her mission while taking evasive action. The landing at 1300 was unopposed, however, and the companies pushed rapidly inland toward a high grassy ridge about 500 yards from the beach.

But as the leading elements reached the top of this ridge, they were taken under mortar and small-arms fire. Major Rogers was killed by a mortar round and Captain Zach D. Cox, Company B commander, was wounded. Captain Charles W. Kelly, Jr., acting second in command, took charge of the battalion just as the enemy cut the Marines off from the beach. Kelly found that he could not communicate with the perimeter, and the close-in fight with the surrounding enemy grew rapidly more desperate. The Company D mortar platoon had only one of its weapons and about 50 rounds of ammunition, and to bring this weapon to bear on the pressing Japanese a mortarman had to lie on his back with his feet supporting the nearly-perpendicular tube from the rear while Master Sergeant Roy Fowel called the range down to 200 yards.

Fortunately, Second Lieutenant Dale M. Leslie flew over at about that time in his SBD. As pilot of a plane incapable of dogfighting in the bomber pack, Leslie was

hunting likely targets while staying clear of the field and air engagements. As he circled overhead, the Marines below spelled out the word "Help" in white undershirts laid on the hillside, and Leslie managed to make radio contact with Edson at the mouth of the Matanikau and relay this distress signal.

That was summons aplenty for Puller, chafing in Edson's provisional command post while his battalion went off to battle without him. The combined attack at the river mouth and inland clearly had miscarried, and his men in 1/7 stood exposed to the full wrath of the Japanese west of the river. With characteristic directness, the lieutenant colonel collected the landing craft and churned out to board the *Ballard*. The ship and her skipper, soon under the Puller spell, steamed to the rescue close ashore, the landing craft in the wake ready to be used for a withdrawal.

It was a day for heroic action. When the force trapped ashore saw the ship coming down the coast, Sergeant Robert D. Raysbrook stood out on a hillock of the ridge and semaphored for attention. From the bridge of the *Ballard* Puller ordered his men to pull out to the beach. Raysbrook, still exposed to the enemy fire, flagged back the information that their withdrawal had been cut off. The ship then asked for fire orders, and with Captain Kelly relaying his signals through the sergeant, batteries on the *Ballard* began to blast out a path to the beach.

Supporting fire from the ship was a deciding factor in the action, but the companies still had a fight ahead of them. Japanese artillery began to take casualties as the Marines withdrew fighting through the enemy infantry still pressing from the flanks and rear. Platoon Sergeant An-

thony P. Malanowski, Jr. took a Browning automatic rifle from a man dropped in action and covered the withdrawal of Company A until he himself was overrun and killed by the Japanese. But by then his company had reached the beach where it set up a hasty defense into which Company B and elements of Company D drew shortly thereafter.

With the Marines fighting off the enemy at their rear, the landing craft now moved shoreward to begin their evacuation, and thereby exposed themselves to heavy Japanese fire from the high ground above the Marines on the beach and from the projecting terrain of Point Cruz to the east. The Japanese were determined not to allow a thwarting of their trap, and the stiffening crossfire drove the craft back offshore where they bobbed in ground swells and indecision.

This was observed by Lieutenant Leslie, still keeping a watchful eye on the action from his SBD, and he came down again to lend a hand. The pilot strafed the Japanese positions and then turned to make a few swooping passes over the landing craft to herd them on their way. Thus heartened and hurried along, the coxswains went back in to the beach.

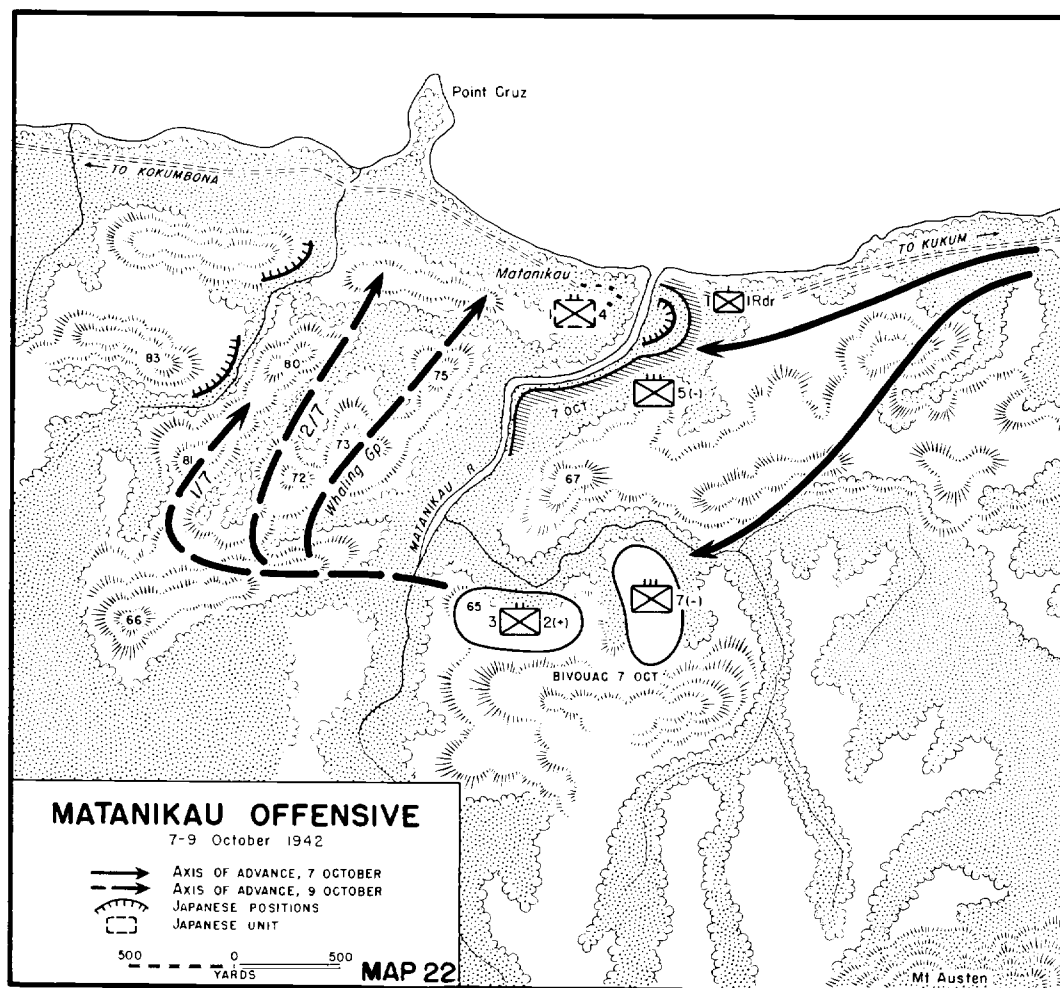
The fire from the beach, although dampened by the strafing SBD, still was heavy, but Signalman First Class Douglas A. Munro of the Coast Guard, coxswain of the craft, led the other coxswains through it and maneuvered his Higgins boat to shield the others. The Marines loaded on board with their wounded while Munro covered them with the light machine guns on his boat. He ordered his boat away when the other craft were clear, and still firing, was making his own withdrawal when he was killed by fire from the beach.

The miniature flotilla returned to the perimeter landing site at Kukum by nightfall. The action had cost this battalion 24 killed and 23 wounded. The raiders and 2/5 likewise withdrew after 1/7 got safely clear of the Point Cruz area, and their casualties added another 36 dead and 77 wounded to the tally for the operation.

ACTION OF 7-9 OCTOBER

Costly as this action at the Matanikau had been, it confirmed the data being collected by intelligence agencies, and these facts over-all were as important as they were disquieting. Japanese ships still entered Guadalcanal waters nearly every night, barges beached along the coast indicated many new landings, air attacks had picked up again since a comparative lull following the Battle of the Ridge, and now it was clear that the Japanese troops assembling on the island were concentrating just beyond the Matanikau. Another and a stronger Japanese counteroffensive loomed, and although defeat of the *Ichiki* and *Kawaguchi Forces* gave the Marines a new confidence in their ability to hold the perimeter, there was yet another factor. Late in September the Japanese began to land 150mm howitzers, and these weapons would be capable of firing on Henderson Field from the Kokumbona area.

Cactus fliers continued to hold their own against enemy air attacks of the field; Japanese gunfire ships had to come late and leave early to avoid the U. S. planes in daylight encounter, and the frequent night raids of Washing-Machine Charlie were more damned than damaging. But big howitzers were something else. The Marines had no weapon that could reach a 150mm in counterbattery, and they had no sound-flash equipment to locate such firing positions, anyway. If the Japanese could



add the effective fires of these weapons to air raids and naval shelling, it might be just enough tip of balance in their favor to hold down the Cactus fliers while a large force mounted to dislodge the Americans from the Lunga.

Accordingly, an attack was scheduled to trap the enemy force and drive survivors beyond artillery range, and a success in this would be followed by establishment of a permanent patrol base at Kokumbona which could make sure the long-range field

pieces stayed out of range. The plan of attack was similar to that of the operation which had just failed, but this new effort would be made in greater strength. The 5th Marines (less one battalion) would engage the enemy at the river mouth while the 7th Marines (also less one battalion) and the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, reinforced by the division scout-sniper detachment, would cross the river inland and then attack north toward Point Cruz and Matanikau Village. (See Map 22)

Colonel William J. Whaling,⁵ who commanded 3/2 and the scout-snipers on this special mission, was to lead to envelopment by crossing the Matanikau some 2,000 yards upstream and then attacking north into the village on the first ridge west of the river. Whaling would be followed by the 7th Marines battalions which would also attack north abreast and to the left of the Whaling group.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, with its composite Cactus Force, was to provide planes for infantry liaison, close air support, and artillery spotting. In the artillery plan, 1/11 would support the 7th Marines; 2/11, the 5th Marines; 5/11, the Whaling Group; and 3/11 would be in general support of the Lunga perimeter. If all went well, Whaling's assault of Japanese positions near the coast would be followed by a 5th Marines river crossing, a passage of Whaling's lines, and a pursuit of the enemy toward Point Cruz where the 7th Marines on Whaling's left would close the trap in front of the withdrawing enemy. The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines provided the division reserve for the operation,⁶ and Vandegrift's com-

⁵ Whaling had been promoted to the rank of colonel shortly after the Guadalcanal landing, and although there was no billet for an additional colonel in the division, he stayed on to train scouts and snipers in practical, combat skills. Graduates of the course returned to their outfits to pass on their knowledge and thus increase the division's general proficiency in patrolling; others replaced these graduates and Whaling's schooling continued. As a unit, the scout-snipers normally operated independently, but sometimes, as in this case, joined other commands during a special mission.

⁶ There was an indication that this unit might be employed in an amphibious envelopment. Arrangements had been made for a boat group, and McKelvy's battalion was on a 30-minute standby. *Final Rept*, Phase V, Annex D.

mand post would coordinate the entire operation. Movements of the forces were to get underway on 7 October, and the coordinated attack would jump off on 8 October.

From recent experience with this growing Japanese force, the Marines expected a stiff fight with all the usual and unusual obstacles encountered in battle. But in this case there was to be one large factor they had no reason to suspect. By an unfortunate coincidence the Japanese also had set 8 October as the date for an attack of their own, and their scheme could hardly have been a better counter against the Marines had they been looking over the shoulders of Vandegrift's staff. Rabaul had ordered Colonel Tadamasa Nakaguma to cross the Matanikau on 8 October with his *4th Infantry* and establish artillery positions which could support the new counterattack then in planning. To accomplish this mission, Nakaguma sent an enveloping force inland across the Matanikau on 6 October while he slipped the cautious first echelon of a bridgehead across the river near the coast. There the Japanese forces met the Marines who moved from the Lunga perimeter at 0700 on 7 October.

Whaling's Group scrapped for several hours with the inland Japanese force which confined its opposition to sniping and harassment, but by the middle of the afternoon Whaling decided to bypass the enemy. At nightfall the envelopment force bivouacked on high ground south of the Matanikau's fork, the designated assembly area for the 8 October attack, and the Japanese did not pursue. Meanwhile the 5th Marines met with greater difficulty from Nakaguma's men near the river mouth.

The advance guard of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines came under fire from this enemy at about 1000, and the battalion deployed forward in an attack while the 2d Battalion swung to the left around the action and reached the river without opposition. The Japanese gave ground to previously prepared positions, but 3/5 was unable to push them beyond this line in spite of flanking assistance from 2/5. Vandegrift reinforced Edson with an understrength raider company, but the Japanese continued to hold their confined bridgehead some 400 yards inland from the beach, and the Marines drew up for the night. They held a 1,500-yard front which extended inland from the coast and bowed around the Japanese pocket on the river's east bank. During the night the 5th Marines and some amphibian tractors simulated noisy preparations for a tank-supported river crossing to divert Japanese attention from the Whaling-7th Marines envelopment force.

Heavy rains which began that night, and continued into the 8th, made trails and hills slick, muddy, and treacherous, and grounded the Cactus fliers. The attack had to be postponed, but the 5th Marines and raiders continued to reduce the Japanese positions on the east bank. At about 1830 the Japanese, under pressure all day from the Marines, made a final effort to break out of their nearly surrounded bridgehead and retreat across the river mouth. Running abreast, the enemy troops charged from their foxholes against the thinly-held Marine right flank where the raiders faced them. Front rank attackers engaged the Marines with small-arms fire while succeeding ranks pitched hand grenades into the raider positions. Some hand-to-hand fighting resulted, and

casualties were high on both sides. Twelve raiders were killed and 22 wounded, while counted enemy dead numbered 59. Some of the surviving Japanese managed to escape across the river, and the bridgehead was completely reduced.

While the coordinated Marine attack waited out the rain, division was warned by higher intelligence sources that the expected strong Japanese counteroffensive appeared close at hand; aerial observers and coastwatchers to the north reported increased troop activity and a shipping concentration around Rabaul. General Vandegrift accordingly scaled down his planned attack to merely a raid in force so that no major troop strength would be beyond a day's march of the perimeter.

This decision did not alter the basic envelopment maneuver, however, and on 9 October Whaling and the 7th Marines moved across the Matanikau and attacked rapidly northward to raid the Point Cruz and Matanikau village areas. Whaling's Group moved along the first high ground west of the river; Lieutenant Colonel Herman H. Hanneken's 2/7 moved north on a ridge some 1,000 yards off Whaling's left flank, and Puller with 1/7 attacked along another ridge west of Hanneken.

Whaling and Hanneken reached the coast without serious opposition while 1/7 on the extreme left encountered a strong force of Japanese in a deep ravine about 1,500 yards inland from Point Cruz. Puller brought artillery and mortar fire down on the Japanese, and his men picked off the enemy with rifle and machine-gun fire as they climbed the far side of the ravine to escape the indirect fire. A few enemy escaped up the steep slope, but most of them were either killed by small-arms fire or driven back down the hill into the mortar and artillery concentration.

It was a most effective arrangement for methodical extermination, and Puller and his men kept it up until mortar ammunition ran low. Then they withdrew to join the Whaling Group and Hanneken, and by 1400 the combined raiding force had retired east of the Matanikau through the covering positions of the 5th Marines and the raiders.⁷ The three-day operation had cost the Marines 65 dead and 125 wounded. A Japanese diary found later by Marines placed the *4th Infantry* losses at 700 men.

⁷ Positions at the river mouth were retained to guard against a new Japanese crossing.

Rain and the threat of a new counter-offensive had thwarted the Marines' attack plans, but the action could still go down in the gain column. The raid had tripped up the attack Colonel Nakaguma had planned for the same period, and it had done away with a great number of his men. And in the short time that men of the 7th Marines had been ashore on the island, they had earned a right to identification as veteran troops. So with a completely combat-wise division on hand—and Army reinforcements on the way—Vandegrift and his staff now made plans to meet the strong Japanese attack that was bearing down upon them.

Japanese Counteroffensive

In spite of the miscarriage of Nakaguma's effort to establish a bridgehead across the Matanikau, the Japanese *Seventeenth Army* continued preparations for its big push. On 9 October, the same day that Lieutenant Colonel Puller caught a major portion of Nakaguma's *4th Infantry* between the devil of small-arms and the deep sea of artillery and mortar concentrations, *Seventeenth Army* General Haruyoshi Hyakutake landed on Guadalcanal to take personal charge of the Japanese campaign.

Things were serious but not desperate. Although Ichiki and Kawaguchi had allowed unfounded optimism and overconfidence to swamp their missions against the Marines, Hyakutake still had a strong force and a proud confidence that he could wipe out the Lunga positions in one blow. And with Guadalcanal safely back in Japanese hands, Imperial troops then would retake Tulagi and occupy Rennell and San Cristobal. At the same time *Seventeenth Army* reserves and the Japanese Navy could renew attacks in New Guinea and take Port Moresby by late November. The *Bushido* spirit would be back at full strength.

By early October the Japanese had brought troops in from the Philippines, the East Indies, China, and Truk to place within the *Seventeenth Army* command in Rabaul and the Solomons two divisions, a brigade, and a reinforced battalion. Support forces included six antiaircraft bat-

talions plus one other AAA battery; a heavy regiment and an independent tank company; one regiment and one battalion of mountain artillery; an engineer regiment, and other troops including a mortar battalion and a unit of reconnaissance aircraft. Included in this general listing were the *Kawaguchi brigade*, the *Ichiki reinforced battalion* and other battalions of the *4th* and *124th Infantry Regiments* (Nakaguma) already defeated or weakened by the Lunga defenders.

By reason of the odd impasse in which both the Japanese and the Allied navies chose to avoid decisive battle to conserve their fleets, the Solomons waters changed hands every twelve hours, and thus each side kept an important trickle of aid going to its small combat force which represented the single point of ground contact between the belligerent powers. In daylight when Cactus could fly cover, the Allied ships came in from Espiritu Santo and other southern areas with reinforcements and supplies for the Marines. Barges, landing craft, and YP's shuttled errands across Sealark Channel. By nightfall the larger ships departed, and most of the others still in the Sealark area withdrew to safety in the Tulagi anchorage. Until dawn the Japanese took over.

The destroyers and cruisers of the Tokyo Express habitually lurked in the Shortlands below Bougainville Island until the afternoon when they would start steaming south to be within 200 miles of

Guadalcanal by about 1800. This was just inside the range of SBD's and TBF's from Henderson Field, but the maneuvering ships made poor targets, and the late hour gave the American planes time for only one crack at them before turning back for Lunga. After that the Express had an open line all the way to Sealark.

While transport destroyers unloaded on either side of the Marine perimeter, Japanese warships stood close in at Lunga and went to work with their guns. Louie the Louse dropped flares to aid the naval gunners, and Washing-Machine Charlie lurked overhead to fritter out his bombs during lulls in surface firing. Under such attacks there was little the Marines could do but crouch in their foxholes and pray—or swear. Lunga defenders could estimate 150 new enemy ground soldiers for every destroyer transport—often five or six a night—that made the Express run, and by early October these troops began to land insultingly close, just across the Matanikau eight to ten miles from Henderson Field. The Allied turn to use the waters came at daylight, but U. S. forces did not have the man power to match the Japanese rate of reinforcement.

Fortunately, the Japanese started slowly. Still thinking in terms of their operation against New Guinea, and miscalculating Allied strength in the Solomons, Imperial planners only dribbled reinforcements to Guadalcanal in August when the Marine position was particularly vulnerable. Not until after the Ichiki and Kawaguchi defeats did Japan begin to take serious stock of Vandegrift and his Marines.

But now the Tokyo Express had stepped up its schedule, and by mid-October Hyakutake had landed his *2d Division*, two

battalions of the *38th Division*, one regiment and three batteries of heavy artillery, a battalion and a battery of mountain artillery, a mortar battalion, a tank company, and three rapid-fire gun battalions. Special troops including engineers and medical personnel, and remnants of earlier attacks brought the Japanese force to about 20,000 men.

Facing this mounting Japanese strength was a Marine force of about the same size. Arrival of the 7th Marines and the transfer of other troops from Tulagi bolstered General Vandegrift's Lunga positions, but until 7 October there was little hope that more reinforcements would be forthcoming. Rear areas in the South Pacific had gained little strength since Vandegrift had argued for control of his 7th Marines, and the plan for the occupation of Ndeni still was in the pending basket. Marine strength thus promised to deteriorate while Japanese strength continued to mount. More than 800 Marine battle casualties had been evacuated by early October, and malaria continued to take its toll.¹

The Cactus fliers were not doing much more than holding their own, either. By 1 October, Lieutenant Colonel Mangrum's original VMSB-232 and Lieutenant Commander Caldwell's Flight 300 were done for,² Army pilots from the 67th Fighter Squadron had only about six or eight of their P-400's in shape to fly, John Smith's VMF-223 had lost an even dozen pilots—six killed and six wounded—and other units, although stronger, still piled up

¹ In October 1,960 malaria patients were hospitalized.

² Mangrum was the only member of his outfit able to leave Henderson Field under his own power. He was evacuated on 12 October. Caldwell, who arrived at Lunga from the carrier *Saratoga* as a lieutenant, had been promoted.

their share of losses. On the first day of October General Geiger had 58 planes; two days later the count stood at 49.

If the Japanese had failed to win, place, or show with Ichiki, Kawaguchi, and Nakaguma, the Allies likewise had been unable to improve their odds by any comfortable margin. To General Harmon the situation looked about as grim as it had on 11 August when he expressed doubt that the Marines could hold their perimeter, and on 6 October he wrote to Admiral Ghormley that the Ndeni operation should be quashed until the situation improved. He questioned the logic of holding troops idle for a new operation when things were going so poorly in a battle already joined. He admitted certain factors favoring the Ndeni occupation, but he added that, "... in the final analysis they are individually or cumulatively vital to the success of main offensive operation or . . . maintaining security of South Pacific bases and lines of communications."³

Specifically, Harmon recommended abandoning the Ndeni operation until the Guadalcanal situation improved; reinforcements of Cactus (Guadalcanal) by at least one regimental combat team; the maximum possible intensification of naval surface action in South Solomons waters; and the prompt buildup of airdrome facilities and supplies at Henderson Field. Ghormley agreed that Vandegrift needed another regiment and that Henderson Field needed facilities and supplies, but the admiral retained for the time his plan to occupy Ndeni and build an airfield there. For the Guadalcanal reinforcement, Ghormley ordered Harmon to prepare a regiment of the New Caledonia garrison,

³ CGSoPac ltr to ComSoPac, 6Oct42 (located at OCMH).

and on 8 October he ordered Admiral Turner to embark the 164th Infantry of the Americal Division, Harmon's choice for the job, and depart Noumea for Guadalcanal on 9 October.

It was to be a blockade run in force. Transports *Zeilin* and *McCawley*, carrying supplies, 210 men of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and 85 Marine casualties as well as the 2,850 men of the Army regiment, sailed under escort of three destroyers and three mine layers while a larger force of four cruisers and five destroyers steamed off the convoy's left flank. These cruisers, *San Francisco*, *Salt Lake City*, *Helena*, and *Boise* and destroyers *Buchanan*, *Duncan*, *Farenholt*, *Laffey*, and *McCalla* were commanded by Rear Admiral Norman Scott. Other U. S. Naval forces in the surrounding waters included Rear Admiral George D. Murray's *Hornet* carrier group some 180 miles southwest of Guadalcanal, and Rear Admiral Willis Augustus Lee's battleship *Washington* group about 50 miles east of Maliata. Scott's screening station for the unloading was near Rennell Island.

THE BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE

On 11 October, while the *Zeilin* and the *McCawley* made for their 13 October anchorage schedule in Lunga Roads, Admiral Scott learned from aerial observers that two Japanese cruisers and six destroyers were bearing down The Slot. It was the night's Tokyo Express, Scott decided, and at 1600 he started toward Guadalcanal at 29 knots to intercept the run. His orders charged him to protect the transports, and to search for and destroy enemy ships and landing craft; he rushed eagerly to work.

Actually Scott headed to intercept a force stronger than reports had indicated. Observers failed to spot three heavy cruisers, two seaplane carriers, and eight destroyers steaming some distance away outside of The Slot. Japanese Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, commander of the *Eighth Fleet* and the *Outer Sea Forces*, and Vice Admiral Jinichi Kusaka, *Eleventh Air Fleet* commander, had teamed up to strike the strongest blow yet against the bothersome Cactus fliers. In the afternoon of the 11th, Kusaka had 30 fighters and 35 bombers up to occupy Henderson fliers while Mikawa's bombardment and reinforcing groups steamed south outside the normal Japanese transport route. Heavy cruisers *Aoba*, *Kinugasa*, and *Furutaka* with destroyers *Hatsuyuki* and *Fubuki* made up the bombardment group while the reinforcing fleet included seaplane carriers *Chitose* and *Nisshin*, and destroyers *Akizuki*, *Asagumo*, *Natsugumo*, *Yamagumo*, *Murakumo*, and *Shirayuki*.

By about 2200, while Scott maneuvered in the waters of Iron Bottom Sound between Savo Island and Cape Esperance, the Japanese bombardment group came into The Slot and steamed south in a double column at 26 knots. At 2330 a spotting plane from USS *San Francisco* reported Japanese ships 16 miles from Savo and off Cape Esperance,⁴ but Scott's ships still were unaware of the serious trouble facing them. Gunnery radar failed to pick up the enemy then approximately 35 degrees forward of the port beam, and although the *Helena* earlier had spotted a Japanese ship bearing 315 degrees and at a distance of 27,700 yards, she didn't report this contact for 15 minutes.

⁴These ships were from the reinforcement group.

Flagship *San Francisco*, with rudimentary radar of that early period, had no contacts, and Scott continued to steam toward Savo with his ships in column. He counted this the best area for intercepting the Express he hoped to derail, and at about 2340 he had reversed course to head back toward the Cape when the *Helena*, at last confident about the blips from her better radar equipment, announced her fix of a target six miles away. Fortunately, since the U. S. fleet was having "eye" trouble, the Japanese ships were completely blind, and even though certain communications misunderstandings⁵ further delayed American fire, first salvos from the *Helena* at 2346 caught the enemy by complete surprise. Scott's ships had usurped Tokyo's turn in Sealark Channel.

The *Salt Lake City*, *Boise*, and *Farenholt* quickly added their fire to that of the *Helena*, and shortly thereafter the U. S. fleet crossed the Japanese "T" (sailed ahead of the Japanese column and at right angles to it) so that a majority of the American guns could bear on each Japanese ship as it came forward. The Japanese destroyer *Fubuki* sank almost at once, the cruiser *Furutaka* took such a mauling that she limped away to sink later, and the *Aoba* caught fire. The only sound survivors, cruiser *Kinugasa* and destroyer *Hatsuyuki*, withdrew. On the American side, the *Boise*, *Salt Lake City*, *Farenholt*, and *Duncan* suffered damage, and the *Duncan* sank the following day.⁶

⁵For an account of these misunderstandings and for other descriptions of the Cape Esperance Battle see *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, Chap VIII.

⁶Also on 12 October Cactus fliers found the Japanese destroyers *Murakumo* and *Natsugumo* north of the Russell Islands, and their attack sank both of these ships.

Scott could count the engagement a victory, but it did not resolve the seesawing for power in the Solomons waters or skies. The Japanese only stepped up their air attacks on Henderson Field and continued preparations for the big push.

PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

Transports *McCawley* and *Zeilen* arrived at Kukum with the Army reinforcements early on 13 October, but this was one of the few bright spots of the day. Both radar and the Northern Solomons coastwatchers missed an air attack that came over at 1202, and the F4F's couldn't get up in time to hamper the 22 fighter-escorted bombers that rained down their bombs from 30,000 feet. Both Henderson Field and Fighter 1 were damaged, and fires from the attack burned 5,000 gallons of aviation fuel.

Between 1330 and 1400 a second strike of 15 Japanese bombers caught most of the American planes back on their fields refueling. Some planes were damaged, and the strike undid the repair work that had been started by the 6th Seabees following the earlier raid. A few Cactus planes got up to pursue the Japanese, but the only American kill was scored by Captain Joseph J. Foss who had arrived on 9 October with Major Leonard K. Davis' VMF-121 of MAG-14. The field was not completely out of action, but big bombers were advised to avoid it except for emergencies.

In spite of these interruptions, Colonel Bryant E. Moore managed to get his 164th Infantry ashore, along with other men and supplies from the transports, but trouble for the perimeter was not over. As the second bomber strike droned away, the 150mm howitzers near Kokumbona were finally heard from. Safely beyond coun-

terbattery range, these weapons began a slow methodical registration on the field and the perimeter. The fire was a brand of damage and destruction the men at Lunga had to live with, and so to have a pinpoint target for their anger if not their weapons they named this new entrant in their war Pistol Pete.

Pete, as was most often the case with Louie the Louse and Washing-Machine Charlie, was plural. Hyakutake had landed 15 of these howitzers. But for the Marines and soldiers it was difficult to imagine batteries getting that personal, and Pete's particular brand of hell was a most personal and singular thing. So Pete became one enemy, the devil himself—the devil and one big gun acting as Tojo's personal Nimrod.

And after he thumped away at the perimeter all that day, an enemy task force built around battleships *Haruna* and *Kongo* came into Sealark Channel after nightfall to launch an 80-minute bombardment.⁷ This was the Japanese *Combat Division 3*, commanded by Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita, and it also included light cruiser *Isuzu* and three ships of *Destroyer Division 31* as a screen, plus a rear guard of four ships from *Destroyer Division 15*. The battleships had on board some new bombardment shells which had just arrived from the home islands. These had a greater bursting radius than former Japanese bombardment shells, and there were enough of them for battleships *Haruna* and *Kongo* to have 500 each.

This was the first time that battleships had been used to bombard Henderson Field, and the Japanese hoped these big guns and the improved ammunition would

⁷ The unloaded American transports had departed late in the afternoon.

completely knock out the Marine air and clear the way for a coordinated infantry attack. Louie the Louse illuminated the field, and the big guns cut loose. Coconut trees splintered, buildings and huts ripped open and crashed down, fragments and wreckage tore into planes and men, and more gasoline went up in bright fires which helped Japanese gunners stay on target for their systematic coverage of the field with more than 900 rounds of the high explosive shells.

As Admiral Tanaka described it later :

The scene was topped off by flare bombs from our observation planes flying over the field, the whole spectacle making the Ryogoku fireworks display seem like mere child's play. The night's pitch dark was transformed by fire into the brightness of day. Spontaneous cries and shouts of excitement ran throughout our ships.⁸

Then, as the ships became silent and withdrew east of Savo Island, the planes came back. Night bombers continued their strikes intermittently until daybreak, and by dawn of 14 October the Cactus Air Force could fly only 42 of the 90 planes that had been operational 24 hours earlier. Forty-one men had been killed and many more wounded, and the airfield was a complete shambles. Among the dead were Major Gordon A. Bell, whose VMSB-141 had finally built up to 21 planes and fliers on 6 October, and four of his pilots: Captains Edward F. Miller and Robert A. Abbott and Lieutenants Henry F. Chaney, Jr. and George L. Haley.

Operations, sorely restricted by the loss of gasoline in the fire, moved to Fighter 1 which was left in better condition than Henderson; and a few B-17's which had been operating temporarily from Guadalcanal managed to bounce aloft from a

2,000 yard stretch of Henderson that still was usable and fly back to Espiritu Santo. The Japanese "Pagoda," air headquarters since the early days, had been partially wrecked, and General Geiger had it bulldozed away. It had proved too good a registration point for bombers, anyway.

For the rest of the day the Japanese ships maintained their control of the waters around Guadalcanal, and planes continued to press their advantage in the air. Between the bombings and the shellings, Pistol Pete's effective interdiction prevented repair or use of the main airstrip, and by midafternoon Henderson had to be chalked off as completely unfit for use. By late afternoon fliers of the Army's 67th Fighter Squadron and 13 dive bomber pilots used Fighter 1—and nearly all of Henderson's remaining supply of fuel—to strike back finally at the Japanese by attacking an early run of the Tokyo Express then only 70 miles north of Guadalcanal. One ship was sunk and another damaged, but the Express did not turn back.

That night (14 October) the Japanese cruisers *Chokai* and *Kinugasa* moved down the channel to bombard Henderson Field while the express brought the six transports carrying General Maruyama's *2d Division* on down to Tassafaronga. The cruisers fired 752 eight-inch shells at the men around Lunga, and by dawn on 15 October five of the enemy transports were clearly visible from the perimeter as they lay off Tassafaronga smugly unloading troops, supplies, and ammunition.

Cactus fliers, smarting from the two-day hammering, drained gasoline from wrecked planes, searched the surrounding jungle for undamaged drums, and finally collected enough aviation fuel to mount an attack with the three SBD's that could still

⁸ *Tanaka Article*, II, 815.

fly. But one of these planes had to be scratched when it tumbled into a crater on the way to the strip, and Lieutenant Robert M. Patterson lost SBD number two when the plane hit a shell hole while he raced for his takeoff. Patterson tried it again with the last dive bomber, and this time he made it. His single-plane attack did not hamper the Japanese much, but while he was flying, the ground crews quickly patched other planes. It resembled an informal neighborhood boxkite club, with members hardly able to wait for work to be completed before they tested their craftsmanship. One at a time the first four planes were taken up to have a chance at the cocky Japanese transports. Two minor hits were scored, but General Geiger stopped the assembly line combat action until he could muster more strength.⁹

At 1000 Cactus was ready with 12 SBD's, and they went up to drop 500- and 1,000-pound bombs on the transports and then strafe their decks. That attack sank one of the transports. Next came attacks from P-39's and the relic P-40's, and fires broke out on two of the ships. After that, fliers from Espiritu Santo began to show up, and B-17's and SBD's from the south sank another transport. The Tokyo Express was in most serious trouble, in spite of 30 Zeros overhead to provide cover, and General Hyakutake might well have considered that the admirals and senior pilots in Rabaul had been somewhat over-

confident in this daring daylight delivery of his reinforcements.

Even General Geiger's own pilot, Major Jack Cram, had his turn during that day of desperation when he made a run on the transports with two torpedoes slung under the wings of the general's *Blue Goose*, a bulbous and gouty PBY-5A. Cram got the torpedoes off, but then he was chased back to Fighter 1 by a clutch of Zeros, like sparrows around a ponderous hawk, and one determined enemy fighter had to be shot away from the smoking *Goose* as Cram came in for his landing.

By day's end three bombed transports of 7,000 to 8,000 tons each were beached and burning off Tassafaronga, and the other two had fled back up Sealark Channel and The Slot. But in spite of this, the Japanese had managed to unload 3,000 to 4,000 men of the *230th* and *16th Infantry Regiments* as well as 80 per cent of the ships' cargo. These troops, the last the Japanese were able to land prior to their concentrated effort against the airfield, brought General Hyakutake's strength on the island to about 20,000 men.

General Vandegrift now had approximately 23,000 men, but the Marine force suffered severely from malnutrition, malaria, the exhaustive defensive actions, patrols, and field engineering work they had accomplished. Most of them were veterans, but in the unhealthy tropics that fact did not necessarily mean an advantage in the long run. Only the 164th Infantry of the Americal Division contained fresh troops.

With this additional regiment ashore, the division again reorganized the perimeter, this time into five new defensive sectors. Clockwise from the Kukum area they were: Sector One—The 3d Defense

⁹ While this action was in progress, Army and Marine C-47's (R4D's) flew in with aviation gasoline, and seaplane tender *MacFarland* brought in additional supplies of the much-needed fuel. Japanese planes next day (16 October) damaged the tender, but she was repaired by her crew in an inlet of Florida Island.

Battalion with elements of the 1st Special Weapons Battalion, amphibian tractor-men, pioneers, and engineers who held 7,100 yards of beach that straddled the Lunga River. (See Map 23, Map Section)

Sector Two—The 164th Infantry and elements of special weapons units with control of a 6,600-yard line from the beach inland along the Ilu River and thence west to a point near the east slope of Bloody Ridge.

Sector Three—The 7th Marines (less 3d Battalion), a 2,500-yard front of inland jungle from Bloody Ridge west to the Lunga River.

Sector Four—The 1st Marines (less 3d Battalion), 3,500 yards of jungle from the Lunga west to the inland flank of the final sector.

Sector Five—The 5th Marines holding the northwest curve of the main perimeter from the flank of the 1st Marines north to the sea and then east along the beach to the west flank of the 3d Defense Battalion.

Since the Japanese attack was expected from the west across the Matanikau, the greatest strength was concentrated on that side of the perimeter. Forward of the 5th Marines' lines the 3d Battalions of both the 1st and 7th Marines held a strong outpost line from the beach at the mouth of the river inland to Hill 67. This line was supported by a battalion of the 11th Marines and elements of the 1st Special Weapons Battalion. The 3d Battalion, 2d Marines and 1st Tank Battalion units constituted the division reserve, and each regimental sector commander was directed to keep a third of his infantry strength in reserve also.

Against these Marine and Army positions, General Hyakutake prepared to launch his attack for the recapture of the

airfield. On 15 October in Kokumbona he issued his attack order to Lieutenant General Masao Maruyama's *2d Division*. Date for the assault was set tentatively for 18 October. The *2d Division* would swing far inland to hit the Marines from the south with a night attack in two columns of battalions while the *Seventeenth Army* artillery commander, General Sumiyoshi, would shell the perimeter and then launch a diversionary strike with infantry units near the mouth of the Matanikau. For this coastal attack Sumiyoshi had a force of some 2,900 men comprising the battalions of the *4th Infantry* plus a tank company, seven light field artillery pieces, fifteen of the 150mm howitzers, and three 100mm guns.

For his inland attack, Maruyama had some eight or nine infantry battalions totaling 5,600 men, plus artillery and supporting troops. General Kawaguchi, who had tried his hand in the same area before, would command the right arm of the assault with two battalions of the *230th Infantry*, one battalion of the *124th Infantry*, and elements of the *3d Light Trench Mortar Battalion*, *6th* and *7th Independent Rapid Gun Battalions*, the *20th Independent Mountain Artillery*, engineers, and medical troops. The left attacking column would be under command of Major General Yumio Nasu and would include the *29th Infantry*, the remainder of the *3d Light Trench Mortar Battalion*, a rapid fire gun battalion, a mountain artillery battalion, and engineers. The *16th Infantry* and some engineers—a part of Nasu's command—would be in reserve behind the *29th Infantry*.

General Hyakutake was confident of success. He had left the bulk of his *38th Division* at Rabaul. *Banzai* was to be

Maruyama's signal of victory at the airfield, and his attack from the south was ordered to press unrelenting destruction upon the enemy until General Vandegrift himself came forth to surrender.

Thus charged, General Maruyama struck out through the jungle wilderness on 16 October.

THE GROUND ACTION

Transportation was pedestrian, cargo moved on bended backs, and hand power drove the engineering tools. Thus the column of enveloping Japanese inched single file across the tortuous Guadalcanal back country like a segmented serpent crawling through the perpetual wet shadows of the tropical forest.

The so-called Maruyama Trail, begun by engineers in September, scratched its thin scar along the floor of the jungle southward from Kokumbona, east across the Matanikau and the Lunga inland from Mount Austen, and then north to an assembly area south of Bloody Ridge. Safely beyond range of Marine patrols and hidden from aerial view by the vine-laced tops of giant hardwoods, the Japanese soldier moved with an artillery or mortar shell lashed to his already heavy load of normal equipment, frequently used ropes to scale the rough ridges and steep valleys, and by turns tugged a line or hunched his shoulder to the common effort of manhandling artillery, mortars, and machine guns.

Heavy rain fell almost every day. The van of the single-file advance often had completed its day's march and bivouacked for the night before the rear elements were able to move. Troops weakened on their half ration of rice. Heavy artillery pieces had to be abandoned along the route, and

mortars also became too burdensome to manage. Frequently unsure of their exact location in the jungle, the Japanese by 19 October still had not crossed the upper Lunga, and Maruyama postponed his assault until the 22d. Meanwhile General Sumiyoshi's fifteen Pistol Petes pounded the Lunga perimeter, air attacks continued, and Imperial warships steamed brazenly into Sealark Channel nearly every night to shell the airfield, beaches, and Marine positions.

The tempo of action obviously was building up for the counteroffensive, and Marines and soldiers worked constantly to improve their field fortifications and keep up an aggressive patrol schedule. Patrols did not go far enough afield, however, to discover Maruyama's wide-swinging enveloping force, and reconnaissance to the east found no indications of a Japanese build-up on that flank. Thus General Vandegrift and his staff were aware only of Sumiyoshi's threat along the coast from the west.

There the first probe came on 20 October. A Japanese combat patrol, augmented by two tanks, ventured into view on the west bank of the Matanikau but turned back after one tank was knocked out by 37mm fire from the lines of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. Sporadic artillery fire was the only Japanese answer to this checkmate, and it continued until sunset the next day. Then the artillery fire intensified briefly, and nine infantry-supported tanks debouched from the west bank jungle and drove eastward for the sandspit at the mouth of the river. But again the fire from a 37mm stopped one of the tanks, and the attack turned back without seriously threatening the river-mouth positions of Company I, 3/1. The Marine



FIVE BLASTED JAPANESE TANKS knocked out by Marine 37mm guns during the abortive attempt to force the perimeter along the mouth of the Matanikau. (USMC 54898)



MARINE LIGHT TANKS, mounting machine guns and 37mm cannon, were severely hampered in their operations by the jungle terrain of Guadalcanal. (USN 18525)

battalion had taken a few casualties from artillery and mortar fire, but neither of these first two attacks had posed a serious threat.

At the Matanikau positions on 22 October Sumiyoshi continued firing his mortars and artillery but mounted no new assault. Inland, General Maruyama struggled with the jungle some distance from his lines of departure, and he was forced to postpone his proposed assault to 23 October. But on that day he still was unprepared to attack and again he set back his plans another 24 hours.

At about 1800 on the 23d, however, Sumiyoshi once more intensified his artillery and mortar fire to lay down an orthodox preparation pattern on the Marine east bank positions and along the coastal route from the Lunga Perimeter. Near the end of evening nautical twilight the artillery fire ceased, and a column of nine 18-ton medium tanks churned across the sandspit in an attempt to force a penetration. In assembly areas to the rear infantry troops stood by to assault in the wake of the tanks.

Slim-barreled 37's again blasted at the Japanese tanks while infantry mortars and howitzers of the 11th Marines dumped prearranged concentrations farther west to break up the pending infantry assault. The enemy ground troops never got started, and the tank charge miscarried when eight of the vehicles were hammered to a standstill by the 37's. One tank managed the crossing but staggered out of control when a Marine pitched a grenade in its track as it lumbered by his foxhole. Pursued by a half-track 75, the beset machine wallowed into the surf where it stalled to form a sitting duck target for the tank destroyer.

The other eight hulks remained strewn along the sand bar across the river mouth, and artillery fire knocked out three more tanks that never got to attack. Hundreds of the enemy soldiers who had been waiting to follow the tanks were killed. The action was over by 2200, although at about midnight the Japanese made a half-hearted attempt to cross the river farther upstream. This thrust was turned back with little trouble.

From his study of interrogations of the Japanese generals involved, Dr. John Miller, Jr., sums up:

Sumiyoshi had sent one tank company and one infantry regiment forward to attack a prepared position over an obvious approach route while the Americans were otherwise unengaged. The Maruyama force, still moving inland, had not reached its line of departure. In 1946, the responsible commanders gave different reasons for the lack of co-ordination and blamed each other. According to Hyakutake, this piecemeal attack had been a mistake. The coastal attack was to have been delivered at the same time as Maruyama's forces struck against the southern perimeter line. Maruyama, according to Hyakutake, was to have notified the *4th Infantry* when he reached his line of departure on 23 October, and he so notified the *4th Infantry*. The regiment then proceeded with its attack.

Maruyama disclaimed responsibility for the blunder, and blamed *17th Army Headquarters*. His forces, delayed in their difficult march, had not reached their line of departure on 23 October. The *17th Army*, he asserted, overestimated the rate of progress on the south flank and ordered the coast forces to attack on 23 October to guarantee success on the south flank.

Sumiyoshi was vague. He claimed that throughout the counteroffensive he had been so weakened by malaria that he found it difficult to make decisions. Despite an earlier statement that he did not know why the attack of 23 October had been ordered, he declared that he had attacked ahead of Maruyama to divert the Americans. Communication between the two forces, he claimed, had been very poor. Radio sets gave off too much light, and thus had been used only

in daylight hours. Telephone communication had been frequently disrupted. As a result the coast force had been one day behind in its knowledge of Maruyama's movement.¹⁰

Meanwhile the Marine division¹¹ had started a shift of manpower within the perimeter. In the face of Sumiyoshi's attacks, and with no patrol contacts to the south or east, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines on 23 October pulled out of its southern lines east of the Lunga and moved west to relieve the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines at the mouth of the Matanikau. This left the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (Puller) with a responsibility for the defense of all of Sector Five, the 2,500-yard defense line from the inland flank of the 164th Infantry west across the southern slopes of Bloody Ridge to the Lunga River. Puller's extended lines were thin, but there appeared very little danger from the south.

Hanneken's 2/7 did not effect its intended relief, however, because of the heavy Japanese artillery fire that engaged 3/1 on the 23d, and on the following day a new assignment was given to the 7th Marines battalion. On the 24th the Marines of 3/7 on Hill 67 south of the Matanikau mouth had spotted a Japanese column, obviously a flanking force,¹² moving east across Mount Austen's foothills. Artillery and air was called in on this enemy movement, but the Japanese disappeared into

jungle ravines about 1,000 yards south of Hill 67 before they could be engaged. In the face of this threat apparently headed for the 4,000-yard gap between the Matanikau outpost and the Lunga perimeter, 2/7 was assigned to plug this hole, and the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines retained its positions overlooking the beach and the Matanikau.

Later the same day came other indications that the Sumiyoshi action would not be the only Japanese effort against the perimeter. Late in the afternoon of 24 October an observer in the 1/7 lines south of the airfield saw a Japanese officer studying Bloody Ridge through field glasses, and a scout-sniper patrol reported seeing the smoke from "many rice fires" in the Lunga valley about two miles south of Puller's positions on the Ridge. By this time twilight was settling over Guadalcanal, and there was little the Marines could do but wait out developments from existing positions. The only troops not in front lines were those in reserve in the various defensive sectors and the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, the division reserve, then bivouacked north of Henderson Field.

The rice fires and the officer with field glasses undoubtedly were signs—and the first the Marines had—of the reinforced *2d Division* that finally had negotiated the grueling advance from Kokumbona over the Maruyama Trail. With all his artillery and mortars strewn along the route behind him, Maruyama at last had crossed the Lunga into his assembly areas south of Bloody Ridge. There the force stood at twilight on 24 October ready to attack with only infantry weapons against the dug-in Marines who were backed up by artillery and mortars.

Hoping for bright moonlight to aid coordination (the night actually went black

¹⁰ Miller, *Guadalcanal*, 157–159, quoted by permission of the author.

¹¹ BriGen Rupertus, ADC, became acting CG of the 1st MarDiv on 23 October. MajGen Vandegrift left at dawn that day for conferences at Noumea, flying out with LtGen Thomas Holcomb, Marine Corps Commandant, whose Pacific tour had brought him to Guadalcanal on 21 October.

¹² This force, never positively identified in reconstructions of battle events, is thought to have been that of Col Oka which appears later in night attacks of 25–26 October. *Final Rept*, Phase V, 22.

with heavy rain), the Japanese general ordered a narrow attack over the ground Kawaguchi's force had assaulted in mid-September. The main effort was assigned to the *29th Infantry*, with the *16th Infantry* in reserve, while farther to the east the Kawaguchi command—now led by Colonel Toshinari Shoji¹³—was to make a parallel assault.

At about 2130 a Japanese unit clashed briefly with a 46-man outpost Puller had stationed forward of his tactical wire, but after a short fire fight the enemy bypassed the position, and the battlefield was quiet. Platoon Sergeant Ralph Briggs, Jr., in charge of the outpost, notified Puller that a large force of Japanese were moving about the outpost hill toward the battalion lines, but Puller ordered his men to hold fire so that Briggs could infiltrate to safety. But the outpost already was flanked by the Japanese moving around the hill, and Briggs led his men to the east while the enemy moved closer to Puller's battalion and began to cut the tactical wire in front of the 1/7 positions.¹⁴

While Puller's men strained to hear the approaching enemy above the sound of drumming rain which lashed the night, the Japanese prepared their routes through the Marine barbed wire and formed up for

their attack. Then at 0030 on 25 October, Nasu's men came out of the jungle screaming their *banzais*, throwing grenades, and firing rifles and machine guns to strike the left center of 1/7's line with an assault in depth on a narrow front. Puller called in mortar and artillery concentrations, his riflemen took up a steady fire, and the machine guns rattled almost endless bursts down their final protective lines.

From Puller's left, troops of the 2d Battalion, 164th Infantry added their fire to that of the Marines, but still the Japanese assaulted, trying to rush across the fields of fire toward the Ridge. The attack kept up for 10 or 15 minutes, but finally ground itself to a halt against the combined arms of the U. S. force. Then there was a lull while the Japanese regrouped and came back again, trying to clear a penetration with their grenades and small arms. The Marine commander assessed correctly that his men were standing off the main attack of Rabaul's big counteroffensive, and that the force in the jungle to his front obviously was strong enough to keep such attacks going most of the night. He called for reinforcements, and division headquarters ordered Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. Hall to take his 3d Battalion of the 164th Infantry down the Ridge to bolster Puller's thin line.

But the reinforcements had a mile of muddy ridge to cover before they could be of any help, and in the meantime the Japanese continued to assault out of the jungle and up the slopes. A small group forced a salient in the Marine line to fall upon a mortar position, and farther to the front Nasu's soldiers worked close to a water-cooled machine gun and knocked out all but two of its crew. Marines near

¹³ Gen Kawaguchi, possibly with a justifiable dislike for this ridge terrain, had advocated an attack farther to the southeast, had thereby fallen from favor and had been relieved by Maruyama. Miller, *Guadalcanal*, citing Sumiyoshi and Tamaki (2d Div CofS), 160.

¹⁴ Thirty-three members of this outpost managed to reach the lines of the 164th Inf the next day, but 13 men remained lost and hunted by the Japanese. Nine of these finally returned to safety after many harrowing adventures with the jungle and enemy, although one of the nine was gone for two weeks. Four of the wanderers were killed by the Japanese.

the mortar position won back the tube from the enemy, and in the machine-gun section Sergeant John Basilone took rescue matters into his own hands. For this action and later heroism in braving Japanese fire to bring up ammunition, Basilone became the first enlisted Marine of World War II to win the Medal of Honor.¹⁵

As these attacks continued, Colonel Hall's soldiers began to arrive in small detachments. Puller made no attempt to give this battalion a line of its own on his threatened front, but instead had his men lead these fresh troops into his line where they were most needed at the moment. The fighting was too brisk and the night too rainy for any major reshuffling of lines. By 0330 the reinforcement was complete, and the Japanese attacks were becoming less intense. Infantry and supporting fires had cut down the Nasu force so that each new assault was made with fewer and fewer men.

Fortunately, all had not gone well for the Japanese plans. Nasu bore the brunt of the effort without assistance to his right where the second assaulting column was to have struck. Colonel Shoji, with Kawaguchi's former command, had strayed out of position in the difficult terrain and poor weather and got in behind General Nasu's *29th Infantry*. Shoji was unable to correct this error in time for his battalions to participate in the action.

But Maruyama was true to his orders to press unrelenting attacks upon the Americans. With characteristic resolution, the Japanese struck at the Marines again and again throughout the night. The *Bushido* spirit was unswerving, but the flesh could not endure the concentrated fire from the

combined U. S. infantry battalions, the artillery, and 37mm's from the neighboring 2d Battalion, 164th infantry. By dawn Maruyama called back his men to regroup for later attacks, and Puller and Hall began to reorganize their intermingled battalions and readjust their lines. The first strong effort of the counteroffensive had been turned back, but the remainder of 25 October, Sunday in the Solomons, was not a restful day.

Heavy rains on the 23d and 24th had turned Fighter 1 into a mud bog, and at 0800 Pistol Pete opened up again on Henderson to fire at ten-minute intervals until 1100. With Cactus fliers thus effectively grounded, enemy planes from Rabaul took advantage of this, and the first fair weather in three days, by attempting to give the Japanese counteroffensive some semblance of the coordination that Generals Sumiyoshi and Maruyama had muffed. Likewise strong enemy naval forces, to be engaged next day in the Battle of Santa Cruz, were known to be approaching, and early in the morning three Japanese destroyers, as bold as the Zeros overhead, cavorted into Sealark Channel to chase off two American destroyer-transport, sink a tug, set fire to two harbor patrol craft, and harass the beach positions of the 3d Defense Battalion. Finally venturing too close to shore, one of the enemy destroyers was chastised by three hits from 5-inch guns of the defense battalion, and the Japanese ships then withdrew. In all, the day earned its name of "Dugout Sunday."

But the name "was a misnomer in a sense."¹⁶ Although the lurking Zeros kept "Condition Red" alerts in effect most of the day, bombing raids came over only

¹⁵ Basilone was killed in 1945 during the Marine assault of Iwo Jima.

¹⁶ *The Island*, 178.

twice,¹⁷ and Lunga defenders not connected with Cactus operations climbed out of their foxholes to watch the dogfights which began after Fighter 1 dried enough to support takeoffs. These American planes were able to go up at 1430 to meet a 16-bomber strike from Rabaul and hamper this attack; and a nine-plane bombing raid at 1500 dumped its explosives on General Geiger's boneyard of discarded wrecks. It was 1730 before Condition Red lifted, but after getting airborne the Cactus fliers had given a good account of themselves.

For the second time in three days Captain Foss shot down four Japanese fighters, and all other members of the Guadalcanal flying force worked so well to make up for time lost during the wet morning that 22 enemy planes had been downed by late afternoon. Three American planes, but no fliers, were lost in the actions. And while the F4F's were battling the Zeros, SBD's and P-39's went off to the north to attack a lurking Japanese naval force. They sank a destroyer and put a cruiser out of action.

Meanwhile, in the reorganization of lines south of Bloody Ridge, Lieutenant Colonel Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines held ground from the Lunga east across the southern slopes of the ridge, and Lieutenant Colonel Hall's 3/164 tied in at that point around four 37mm guns and extended across low jungle country to the right flank of the 2d Battalion, 164th. In the sector west of the Lunga the 5th Marines swung a line into the jungle about a half mile in from the beach and

made visual contact with the left (east) flank of Colonel Hanneken's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines which extended from 3/7's dangling flank near the Matanikau back toward the Lunga perimeter. It was clear that Maruyama waited in the jungle to launch another attack in the big counter-offensive, and the Lunga defenders were determined to have stronger positions ready to meet him this time.

In spite of his losses the previous night, Maruyama still had manpower sufficient to build a better attack against the Marines and soldiers, but he somehow gained some faulty intelligence which kept the *Shoji (Kawaguchi) Force* idle for a second night. The intelligence caused Maruyama to expect a U. S. counterattack on his right (east) flank, and he sent Shoji, who had gotten lost in the wet darkness of the first assault, to screen the flank while Nasu's 29th Infantry and the 16th Infantry (previously the Maruyama reserve) made ready to carry the new assault.

After dark (on 25 October), the Japanese repeated the pattern of attack used the previous night. With only machine guns to augment their hand-carried weapons, groups of from 20 to 200 soldiers shouted out of the darkness to assault the entire length of the Puller-Hall line. The strongest of these attacks sent two machine-gun companies with supporting riflemen against the junction of the Marine and Army battalions where a jungle trail led north to the airfield. Artillery, mortars, small arms, and the four canister-firing 37's cut down the repeated Japanese assaults. A company from the 1st Marine Division reserve, as well as an Army platoon, came forward to reinforce, and the lines held.

Taking staggering losses, the Japanese continued hammering against the Ameri-

¹⁷ *Ibid.* The final action reports of the 3d DefBn mention seven attacks, but these included also strafing attacks from fighters. The *Final Rept*, Phase V, 25-26, mentions only that enemy fighters were overhead "at irregular intervals throughout the daylight hours."

can lines throughout the night while farther to the west Colonel Oka (whose troops probably had been those spotted on Mount Austen's slopes on 23 October) sent his force against the thin line of 2/7. This Marine battalion had been under artillery fire (from the Kokumbona area) throughout the day, snipers also had scored some American casualties, and now from 2130 to 2300 it was jarred by three strong attacks which Oka made in battalion strength. The weight of the attacks fell mostly heavily on Company F on the left flank of Hanneken's line.

Until midnight these thrusts were thrown back, but at 0300 an assault swept over the Marine company. Enfilading fire from nearby foxholes of Company G failed to dislodge the Japanese, and they took over Company F's high ground. In the haze of morning some 150 Japanese could be observed in F/2/7 foxholes firing American machine guns at adjacent Marine emplacements.

Major Odell M. Conoley, 2/7 executive officer, led a jury-rigged counterattack force of headquarters troops against these Japanese, and he was joined by a platoon from Company C, 5th Marines and by personnel from the 7th Marines regimental CP. Surprising the Japanese, this force killed and drove off the enemy penetration, while a mortar barrage prevented Oka's soldiers from reinforcing.

This was the end of the Japanese October counteroffensive. The Marines, this time with the valuable assistance of the Army regiment, had driven off the *17th Army's* strongest attempt to recapture the Henderson Field area. And again part of the Japanese failure could be laid to faulty intelligence, combined with an over-optimistic evaluation of their own capabilities, and a contemptuous evaluation of the

American fighting man. Had the enveloping Japanese successfully negotiated the Maruyama Trail with their mortars and artillery, and had the Japanese managed over-all coordination, the battle might well have had a different outcome. At least the Japanese would have taken a heavier toll of Americans and might well have effected serious penetration of the perimeter. But these errors formed the foundation of a grisly monument of failure: some 3,500 Japanese soldiers dead, including General Nasu and his regimental commanders—Colonel Furumiya (*29th Infantry*) and Colonel Hiroyasu (*16th Infantry*). It was a beaten and disorganized Japanese force which began withdrawing inland during the morning of 26 October.¹⁸

By contrast, although records are sketchy or nonexistent, American losses were far less: probably around 300 dead and wounded, including those hit by shelling and bombing. The 164th Infantry sustained 26 killed and 52 wounded (during all of October), and the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines lost 30 dead in its action against Oka's Japanese. No figures are available on losses of 1/7, but evidence indicates that these probably did not much exceed 100 dead and wounded.¹⁹

THE BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ

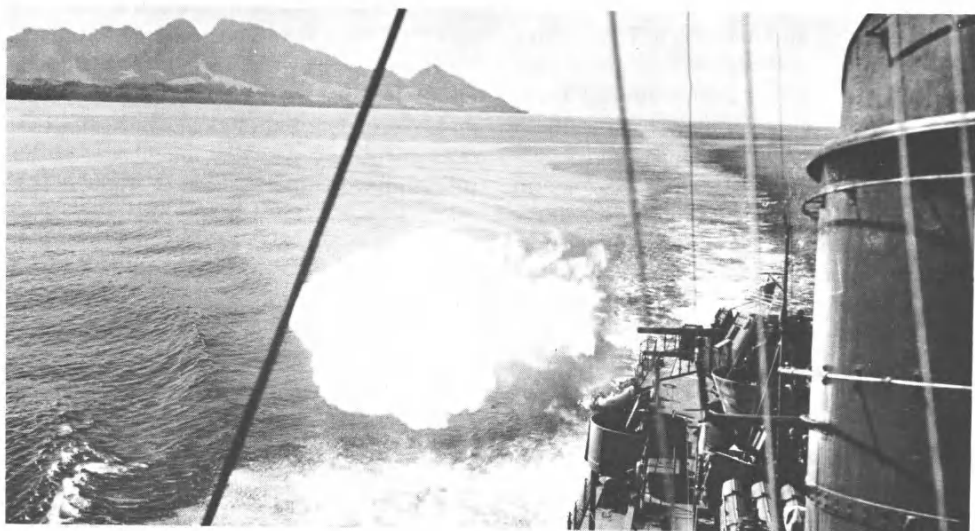
As Maruyama's assaults were weakening on the south slopes of Bloody Ridge

¹⁸ A general withdrawal of the force began about 29 October, but there were no more attacks after the morning of 26 October when Maruyama broke contact with U. S. troops and pulled back into the jungle.

¹⁹ Another source lists 7th Marine dead as 182, and total casualties for the 164th Infantry as 166 killed and wounded. *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 198. Adm Morison's totals apparently are too high, and he lists no sources.



JAPANESE TORPEDO PLANE ignores two American cruisers as it heads for the crippled carrier Hornet which was sunk during the Battle of Santa Cruz. (USN 20447)



NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT for the Army-Marine advance up the north coast of Guadalcanal is provided by the 5-inch guns of an American destroyer. (USN53439)

and while Colonel Oka's brief penetration of 2/7's line still was two hours away, an American patrol plane southeast of Guadalcanal reported sighting elements of a large Japanese fleet in the waters near the Santa Cruz Islands. These ships comprised another part of the "coordinated" Japanese counteroffensive. Admiral Kondo of the *Second Fleet* and Admiral Nagumo of the *Third Fleet* had teamed up with four carriers and four battleships, eight cruisers, 28 destroyers, and supporting vessels; and they were standing by to steam into Sealark Channel when they got the "*Banzai*" signal that Henderson Field had been recaptured.²⁰ Meanwhile they guarded against American reinforcements or countermeasures from the south.

Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, then northeast of the New Hebrides with the *Enterprise* and *Hornet* carrier groups, moved to attack. At 0650 on 26 October two more observation planes spotted Japanese carriers 200 miles northeast of the American force at about the same time Japanese planes were sighting the U. S. ships.

Air action began almost at once. Japanese carrier *Zuiko* was hit in her stern by two of the scouting U. S. dive bombers. A hole in *Zuiko's* flight deck prevented flight operations, but the undamaged carriers *Junyo*, *Shokaku*, and *Zuikaku* mounted air strikes against the American ships.

Twenty minutes later the *Hornet* sent up 15 SBD's, six Avenger torpedo planes, and eight Wildcats, and a short time after that the *Enterprise* got her first 19 planes into the air. By 0830, 73 American planes were airborne to meet the approximately 125

Japanese aircraft. Other flights followed from both forces.

Like some of the previous Pacific naval battles, it was an air-air and air-surface affair. The opposing ships did not close for surface fighting. Twenty U. S. planes were lost to enemy action and 54 to other causes. The Japanese lost 100 planes.

The fate of USS *Hornet* is an example of the desperate fighting which took place during the Santa Cruz battle. Lamed by a starboard bomb hit, the carrier next caught a spectacular suicide crash as the Japanese squadron leader's wounded plane glanced off her stack and burst through the flight deck where two of the plane's bombs exploded. Japanese "*Kates*" then bore in on the carrier to launch their torpedoes from low astern. Two exploded in engineering spaces, and the ship, clouded by thick smoke and steam, lurched to starboard. Dead in the water, she then took three more bomb hits. One exploded on the flight deck, another at the fourth deck, and the third below the fourth deck in a forward messing compartment.

As if that were not enough, a blazing "*Kate*" deliberately crashed through the port forward gun gallery and exploded near the forward elevator shaft. Salvage and towing operations got underway almost at once and continued, amid repeated Japanese attacks, until dark when the ship was abandoned and later sunk. The *Hornet* lost 111 killed and another 108 wounded.

Meanwhile the destroyer *Porter* had sustained fatal damage, and the *Enterprise*, *South Dakota*, light antiaircraft cruiser *San Juan*, and destroyer *Smith* were damaged but not sunk. The Japanese lost no ships, but three carriers and two destroyers were damaged. One carrier, the *Shokaku*,

²⁰ For an account of an over-optimistic Japanese "*banzai*" in this connection see *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 201.

was so badly mauled that she saw no more action for nine months.

Not defeated, but hearing of the Army's failure on Guadalcanal, the Japanese naval force withdrew at the end of the day. Al-

though control of South Pacific waters still had not been resolved, the loss of planes was a serious blow to Japan, and one that was to aid the Allied fleet within a few weeks. A bigger naval battle was brewing.

Critical November

If Tokyo by now realized that one of her long tentacles of conquest had been all but permanently pinched off unless the Solomons invaders were at last taken in all seriousness, the critical Guadalcanal situation likewise was getting more active attention in Washington. On 18 October Admiral Ghormley had been relieved of South Pacific Area command by the aggressive Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., and almost immediately the new commander was allotted more fighting muscle to back his aggressiveness.¹

Ten days after Halsey assumed his new command, the Marine Corps established a supra-echelon staff for coordination of all Fleet Marine Force units in the South Pacific. Major General Clayton B. Vogel headed this newly organized I Marine Amphibious Corps with headquarters at Noumea. He exercised no tactical control over the Guadalcanal operation; his staff was concerned only with administrative matters. And it would not be until later that the amphibious corps would have many troops with which to augment divisions for landing operations.

At a Noumea conference on 23–25 October, General Vandegrift assured Admiral Halsey that Guadalcanal could be held if reinforcements and support were stepped up. Some thought also had to be given to relief of the reinforced 1st Marine Division, weakened by strenuous combat

and the unhealthy tropics. Halsey promised Vandegrift all the support he could muster in his area, and the admiral also requested additional help from Nimitz and from Washington.

Shortly after this conference the Marine Commandant, General Holcomb, who had concluded his observations of the Marine units in action on Guadalcanal, sought to clear up the command controversy between General Vandegrift and Admiral Turner. Holcomb prepared for Admiral King, the Chief of Naval Operations, a dispatch in which he set forth the principle that the landing force commander should be on the same command level as the naval task force commander and should have unrestricted authority over operations ashore. Holcomb then used his good offices to get Admiral Halsey to sign this dispatch. The Marine Commandant then started back to the States, and at Nimitz' office in Pearl Harbor he again crossed the path of the dispatch he had prepared for Halsey's signature. Holcomb assured Nimitz that he concurred with this message, and the admiral endorsed it on its way to King. It was waiting when Holcomb returned to Washington, and King asked the Commandant whether he agreed with this suggestion for clearing up the question of how a landing operation should be commanded. Holcomb said he did agree with it, and this led eventually to the establishment of firm lines of command for future operations in the Pacific. Holcomb had

¹ For a discussion of this command change see *Struggle For Guadalcanal*, 182–183.

shepherded Marine Corps thinking on this important matter across the Pacific to its first serious consideration by the top military hierarchy.²

Aside from the general policy that directed America's major war effort toward Nazi Germany during this period, the South Pacific was not intentionally slighted. But as Rear Admiral Samuel E. Morison points out, Washington at this time had its hands full:

Our predicament in the Solomons was more than matched by that caused by the German submarines, which, during the month of October, sank 88 ships and 585,510 tons in the Atlantic. The North African venture was already at sea; British forces in Egypt still had to be supplied by the Cape of Good Hope and Suez route. Guadalcanal had to be fitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff into a worldwide strategic panorama, but Guadalcanal could be reinforced only by drawing on forces originally committed to the build-up in the United Kingdom (Operation "Bolero") for a cross-channel operation in 1943. General Arnold wished to concentrate air forces in Europe for the strategic bombing of Germany; Admiral King and General MacArthur argued against risking disaster in the Solomons and New Guinea in order to provide for the eventuality of a future operation in Europe. President Roosevelt broke the deadlock on 24 October by sending a strong message to each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, insisting that Guadalcanal must be reinforced, and quickly.³

Immediate results of the Roosevelt order were particularly cheering to Halsey and Vandegrift. Admiral Nimitz ordered the new battleship *Indiana* and her task group to the South Pacific; the 25th Army Division in the Hawaiian area was alerted for a move south; the repaired USS *Enterprise*, damaged in the August Battle of the Eastern Solomons, headed back into the

fighting. The Ndeni operation, much dog-eared from perpetual shuffling in the pending file, finally was scrapped by Halsey, and the 1st Battalion, 147th Infantry, the latest outfit to start the Ndeni job, was called off its course to the Santa Cruz Islands and diverted to Guadalcanal. Other battalions of the 147th regiment followed.

Also scheduled to reinforce the general Guadalcanal effort were Colonel Richard H. Jeschke's 8th Marines from American Samoa, two companies (C and E) of Colonel Evans F. Carlson's 2d Raider Battalion,⁴ a detachment of the 5th Defense Battalion, Provisional Battery K (with British 25-pounders) of the Americal Division's 246th Field Artillery Battalion, 500 Seabees, two batteries of 155mm guns, additional Army artillery units, and detachments of the 9th Defense Battalion. The old Guadalcanal shoestring from which the operation had dangled for three critical months was being braided into a strong cord.

The two 155mm gun batteries—one Marine and the other Army⁵—landed in the Lunga perimeter on 2 November to provide the first effective weapons for answering the Japanese 150mm howitzers. On 4 and 5 November the 8th Marines landed with its supporting 1st Battalion of the 10th Marines (75mm pack howitzers), but the other reinforcements commenced a distinctly separate operation on the island. These units included the 1st Battalion of the 147th Infantry, Carlson's Raiders, the 246th Field Artillery's Provisional Battery K, and the Seabees. Joined under

² LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., interview with Gen. T. Holcomb, 12 Apr 49.

³ *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 184–185.

⁴ Elements of this battalion conducted the Makiu Island raid.

⁵ Btry A of the Marine 5th DefBn and Btry F of the Army 244th CA Bn.

the command of Colonel W. B. Tuttle, commander of the 147th Infantry, this force landed on 4 November at Aola Bay about 40 miles east of the Lunga. There, over the objections of Vandegrift and others, Tuttle's command was to construct a new airfield.⁶

Geiger's Cactus Air Force also grew while Vandegrift added to his man power on the ground. Japanese pounding under the October counteroffensive had all but put the Guadalcanal fliers out of action; on 26 October, after Dugout Sunday, Cactus had only 30 planes capable of getting into the air.⁷ But in the lull of action following the defeat of General Hyakutake and the withdrawal of the Japanese naval force from the Battle of Santa Cruz, Cactus ground crews had a chance to do some repairs, and more planes began to arrive at Henderson Field.

Lieutenant Colonel William O. Brice brought his MAG-11 to New Caledonia on 30 October, and in the next two days parts of Major Joseph Sailer, Jr.'s VMSB-132 and Major Paul Fontana's VMF-211 reported up to Guadalcanal. On 7 November Brigadier General Louis E. Woods assumed command at Cactus, and General Geiger went down to his wing headquarters at Espiritu Santo. By 12 November MAG-11 completed a move to Espiritu Santo where it would be close to Henderson, and more of the units were able to operate from the Solomons field. "In mid-

November there were 1,748 men in Guadalcanal's aviation units, 1,557 of them Marines."⁸

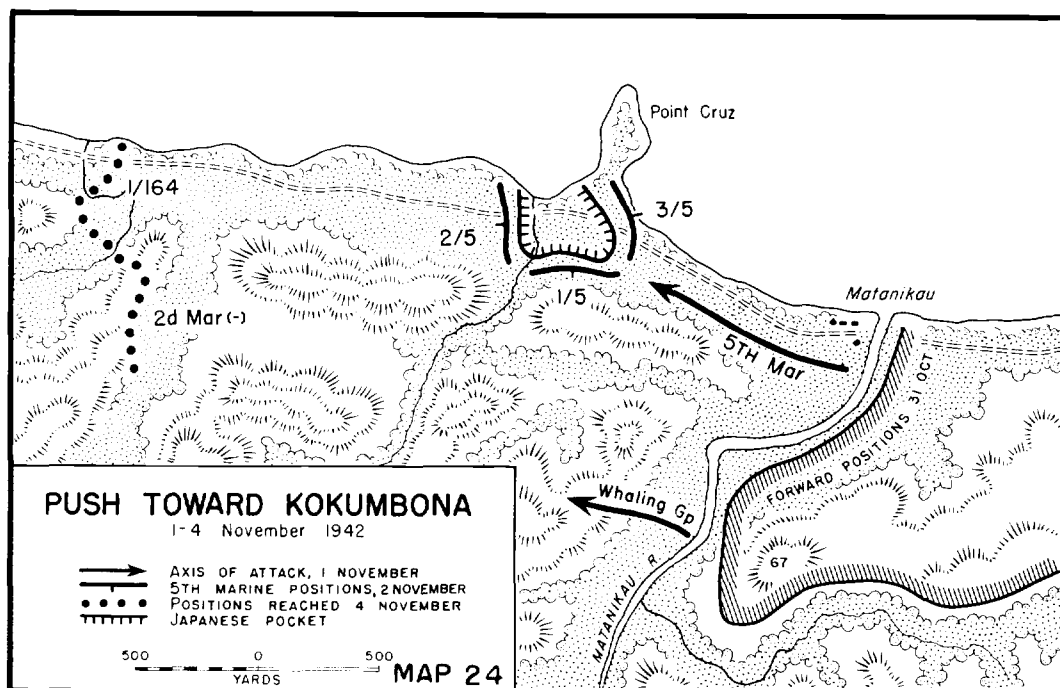
As these fresh troops and fliers came ashore, the veterans of Guadalcanal's dark early days were off on an expedition to the west. With the Japanese reeling back from their defeat of late October, the Marines sought to dislodge the enemy completely from the Kokumbona-Poha River area some five and a half miles west of the Matanikau. Once cleared from this area, where the island's north coast bends sharply northwest toward Cape Esperance, the Japanese Pistol Petes would be beyond range of Henderson Field, and the Marines and soldiers could possibly meet Japanese reinforcements from the Tokyo Express before another buildup could muster strength for a new major effort against the perimeter. Under Colonel Edson, the force on this operation included the colonel's 5th Marines, the 2d Marines (less 3/2), and a new Whaling Group consisting of the scout-snipers and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. The 11th Marines and Army artillery battalions, Cactus fliers, engineers, and bombardment ships were in support. (See Map 24)

The plan: At 0630 on 1 November attack west across the Matanikau on engineer footbridges; move on a 1,500-yard front along the coast behind supporting artillery and naval shelling; assault the Japanese with the 5th Marines in the van, the 2d Marines in reserve, and with the Whaling Group screening the inland flank. By 31 October preliminary deployment had taken place. The 5th Marines had relieved battalions of the 7th west of the Lunga; the 1st and 2d Battalions, 2d Ma-

⁶ Vandegrift's objection to the Aola Bay airfield harked back to the old dispute between him and Adm Turner. Turner continually wanted to spread out along the Guadalcanal coast; Vandegrift objected to the establishment of additional perimeters before the first one became strong.

⁷ These included 12 F4F's, 11 SBD's, 3 P-400's, 3 P-39's, and one F4F-7 photographic plane.

⁸ *Marine Air History*, 111.



rines had come across from Tulagi;⁹ and the engineers were ready with their fuel-drum floats and other bridging material for the crossing sites.

Companies A, C, and D of the 1st Engineer Battalion constructed the bridges during the night of 31 October, and by dawn of 1 November, Company E of 2/5 had crossed the river in rubber boats to cover the crossing of the other units on the bridges. The 1st and 2d Battalions of the 5th Marines reached their assembly areas on the Matanikau's west bank by 0700 and moved out in the attack with 1/5 on the right along the coast and 2/5 on high ground farther inland. The 3d Battalion was Edson's regimental reserve, and battalions of the 2d Marines followed as force reserve. The area around Point Cruz was

⁹ The 3d Bn, 2d Mar, long the division's mobile reserve, was sent to rest on Tulagi.

shelled by cruisers *San Francisco* and *Helena* and destroyer *Sterrett* while P-39's and SBD's from Henderson Field and B-17's from Espiritu Santo strafed and bombed Japanese positions around Kokumbona.

Marines of 2/5 advanced against little opposition along the high ground to reach their first phase line by 1000 and their second phase line by 1440. But near the coast 1/5 met strong resistance, and as it held up to attack Japanese dug in along a deep ravine near the base of Point Cruz, the two 5th Marines battalions lost contact. Farther inland, Whaling screened the flank with no significant enemy contacts. It seemed clear that 1/5 had located the major Japanese force in the area.

While Companies A and C of 1/5 (Major William K. Enright) engaged the enemy, Company B was ordered up to fill

a gap which opened between these attacking companies. The opposition held firm, however, and Company C, hardest hit in the first clash with the entrenched Japanese, had to withdraw. The Company B commander, trying to flank positions which had plagued the withdrawn unit, led a 10-man patrol in an enveloping maneuver which skirted behind Company C, but this patrol also suffered heavy casualties and it, too, was forced to withdraw. Edson then committed his reserve, and Companies I and K of 3/5 (Major Robert O. Bowen) came up to the base of Point Cruz on a line between 1/5 and the coast. This put a Marine front to the east and south of the Japanese pocket; but the enemy held, and the Marines halted for the night.

Next morning (2 November) Edson's 2d Battalion (Major Lewis W. Walt) came to the assistance of the regiment's other two battalions, and the enemy was thus backed to the beach just west of Point Cruz and engaged on the east, west, and south. The Marines pounded the Japanese with a heavy artillery and mortar preparation, and late in the afternoon launched an attack to compress the enemy pocket. Companies I and K stopped short against an isolated enemy force distinct from the main Japanese position, but this resistance broke up under the campaign's only authenticated bayonet charge, an assault led by Captain Erskine Wells, Company I commander.

Elsewhere the going also was slow, and advances less spectacular. A Marine attempt to use 75mm half-tracks failed when rough terrain stopped the vehicles. The 3/5 attack gained approximately 1,500 yards but the main pocket of resistance held, and the regiment halted for another night.

Final reduction of the Japanese stronghold began at 0800 on 3 November. Companies E and G of 2/5 first assaulted to compress the enemy into the northeast corner of the pocket, and this attack was followed by advances of Company F of 2/5 and Companies I and K of 3/5. Japanese resistance ended shortly after noon. At least 300 enemy were killed; 12 anti-tank 37mm's, a field piece, and 34 machine guns were captured.

It seemed that this success should at last help pave the way for pushing on to Kokumbona, the constant thorn in the side of Lunga defenders and long a military objective of the perimeter-restricted Marines. From there the enemy would be driven across the Poha River, Henderson Field would be beyond reach of Pistol Pete, and the Japanese would have one less weapon able to bear on their efforts to ground the Cactus fliers. But the frustrating Tokyo Express again quashed Marine ambitions. The Express had shifted its terminal back to the east of the perimeter, and another buildup was taking place around Koli Point.

The 8th Marines was not due in Sealark Channel until the next day (and there was always a chance that Japanese surface action would delay this arrival) so Vandegrift again pulled in his western attack to keep the perimeter strong. Division decided to hold its gain, however, and it left Colonel Arthur's 2d Marines (less 3d Battalion) and the 1st Battalion, 164th Infantry on the defense near Point Cruz while Edson and Whaling led their forces back to Lunga.

ACTION AT KOLI POINT

With their October counteroffensive completely wrecked, the Japanese faced an

important decision, and on 26 October Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, Chief of Staff of the *Southeastern Fleet*, came down to Guadalcanal from Rabaul to see what General Hyakutake proposed to do about it. And while Hyakutake had been proud and confident when he reached Guadalcanal on 9 October, Ohmae reflected Rabaul's current mood which had been much dampened during the month. The counteroffensive failed, Ohmae believed, because Hyakutake bungled by not carrying out attacks according to schedule and because the Army did not understand problems facing the fleet. "The Navy lost ships, airplanes and pilots while trying to give support to the land assault which was continually delayed," Ohmae said later in response to interrogations.¹⁰

On 9 October Hyakutake's appetite had been set for Port Moresby; Guadalcanal was but a bothersome bit of foliage to be brushed aside along the way, and the general had the bulk of his 38th Division and other reserves, plus quantities of supplies, in Rabaul and the Shortlands ready to plunge south when the airfield at Lunga was plucked from the Solomons vine like a ripe grape. But now "the situation was becoming very serious,"¹¹ Ohmae was here to point out, and either Guadalcanal or Port Moresby had to be scratched off the conquest list, at least temporarily. In the conference with the naval captain, Hyakutake agreed that the U. S. advance in the Solomons was more serious than the one through New Guinea,¹² and he agreed

to divert his reserves to a new assault against Vandegrift and the Henderson fliers on the banks of the Lunga.

This time, though, things would be conducted differently. Rather than lurking in wait of successes ashore, the *Imperial Fleet* would run the show. Ohmae's chief, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the *Combined Fleet*, wanted Hyakutake's uncommitted troops of the 38th Division¹³ to land at Koli Point so the Americans would be worried and split by forces on both sides of them. High-speed army vessels would transport these Japanese troops down The Slot under escort of the Tokyo Express. Then Yamamoto's bombardment ships and Japanese fliers would knock out Henderson Field once and for all, and Hyakutake could land more troops and finish off a battered defensive garrison which would have no air support.

It was a bold plan, but there were some Japanese officers who thought that it was not particularly wise. Admiral Tanaka, that veteran of many distressing hours in The Slot, was one of these. He had suggested after the October defeat that defenses should be pulled back closer to Rabaul so that they would have a better chance to stand off the Allies while Japan gained more strength in the Solomons. "To our regret," he reported later, "the Supreme Command stuck persistently to reinforcing Guadalcanal and never modified this goal until the time came when the island had to be abandoned."¹⁴

¹⁰ Combined statements of Capt Ohmae and Cdr Tadashi Yamamoto, *USSBS Interrogations*, II, 468, hereinafter cited separately as *Ohmae Interrogation* and *Yamamoto Interrogation*.

¹¹ *Ohmae Interrogation*, 468.

¹² *Ibid.* By autumn of 1942 the Japanese garrisons on New Guinea, all but abandoned because

of the press of things at Guadalcanal, had been handed their first setback by Australian troops who were beginning to take the offensive against them.

¹³ Two battalions of this division already were ashore on Guadalcanal.

¹⁴ *Tanaka Article*, II, 818.

Colonel Shoji already was at Koli Point with his veterans of the October assault against Bloody Ridge, and other Japanese troops now made ready to join him there. Hyakutake planned to build an airfield there so Japanese planes could be more effective during the November attacks. But while Edson and Whaling fought their action to the west around Point Cruz, a Marine battalion marched out to the east and stepped into the middle of Hyakutake's plans there.

On 1 November, the same day Edson and Whaling crossed their foot bridges westward over the Matanikau, division sent Lieutenant Colonel Herman H. Hanneken's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines out to investigate reports of Japanese activities to the east. Hanneken trucked his men to the Tenaru River that day, and on 2 November the battalion made a forced march across the base of Koli Point to the Metapona River, about 13 miles east of the perimeter. Intelligence had it that the Japanese had not yet been able to build up much strength here, and Hanneken's mission was to keep things that way. On the night of 2 November he deployed his battalion along the coast east of the Metapona and dug in for the night. (See Map 25, Map Section)

While 2/7 Marines strained to see and hear into the black rainy night, six Japanese ships came down Sealark Channel, lay to offshore about a mile east of the American battalion, and began to unload troops. This force was made up of about 1,500 men from the *230th Infantry*,¹⁵ and

they were carrying out initial plans of the Imperial Army and Navy for the buildup to the east.

Rain had put Colonel Hanneken's radio out of commission, and he could not contact division with information of this landing. The Marines held their positions that night but moved to attack next morning after an eight-man Japanese patrol approached their line by the Metapona. Marines killed four members of this patrol, and the battalion then moved up to fire 81mm mortars into the enemy's landing site. This brought no immediate response, but as Hanneken's infantrymen prepared to follow this mortar preparation a large force of Imperial soldiers maneuvered to flank the Marines who began also to draw mortar and artillery fire. In the face of this coordinated attack by the Japanese, 2/7 withdrew, fighting a rear guard action as it pulled back to take up stronger positions on the west bank of the Nalimbiu River, some 5,000 yards west of the Metapona.

During the withdrawal, Hanneken managed to make radio contact with the CP at Lunga. He reported his situation, and called for air attacks against the enemy and for landing craft to meet him at Koli Point and evacuate his wounded. This message reached division at 1445, and Vandegrift immediately dispatched the requested air support and also relayed the situation to gunfire ships which had supported the Koli Point operation.

¹⁵ CG 1st MarDiv msg to ComSoPac, 17Nov42, in SoPac War Diary (located at NHD). Another source says no Japanese troops landed that night; only supplies were put ashore, and the force Hanneken's battalion met next day

was only Shoji and his veterans of the October counteroffensive. *Miller, Guadalcanal*, citing interrogation of MajGen Takeo Ito, former CG of the 38th Division, 196*n*. Dr. Miller's text recognizes the landing, however, and lists the above message from the SoPac War Diary as the source. *Ibid.*, 196.

Cruisers *San Francisco* and *Helena* and destroyers *Sterrett* and *Lansdowne* shelled likely target areas east of the Marine battalion, and planes ranged overhead in vain searches for signs of the enemy. Communications still were none too good, however, and elements of 2/7 were accidentally strafed and bombed by some of the first planes that came out from Cactus.

Meanwhile, division had made the decision to concentrate more force against the evident buildup to the east. The western attack then in progress would be called back while General Rupertus, due to come across Sealark Channel from Tulagi, went to Koli Point with Colonel Sims of the 7th Marines, and Sims' 1st Battalion (Puller). And to the efforts of this regiment (less its 3d Battalion), Vandegrift added the 164th Infantry (less 1st Battalion) which would march overland to envelop the Koli Point enemy from the south. Artillery batteries of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines would be in general support.

By dusk of 3 November the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines reached the west bank of the Nalimbiu River near the beach at Koli Point, and there General Rupertus met Hanneken next morning with Colonel Sims and Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. At 0600 on 4 November Brigadier General Edmund B. Sebree, Americal Division ADC who had just arrived on the island to prepare for the arrival of other Americal troops (which included the 132d and 182d Infantry regiments, in addition to the 164th Infantry already in the Solomons action), marched out of the perimeter in command of the 164th Infantry. Thus General Vandegrift, with two field forces commanded by general officers, operated his CP like a small corps head-

quarters.¹⁶ And to add even more troops to this concentration of effort to the east, Vandegrift obtained release of Carlson's 2d Raider Battalion from Colonel Tuttle's command at Aola Bay, and ordered it to march overland toward Koli Point and cut off any Japanese who might flee east from the envelopment of the 7th Marines and the 164th Infantry.

On 4 November the Japanese on the east bank of the Nalimbiu did not seriously threaten the Marines on the west, but General Rupertus held defensive positions while awaiting the arrival of the 164th Infantry. The soldiers, weighted down by their heavy packs, weapons, and ammunition, reached their first assembly area on the west bank of the Nalimbiu inland at about noon. There the regimental CP bivouacked for the night with the 3d Battalion while the 2d Battalion pushed on some 2,000 yards downstream toward Koli Point.

Next day the 3d Battalion, 164th crossed the river about 3,500 yards upstream and advanced along the east bank toward the Japanese. The 2d Battalion likewise crossed the river and followed its sister battalion to cover the right rear of the advance. As the soldiers neared the Japanese force they began to draw scattered small-arms fire, and two platoons of Company G were halted temporarily by automatic weapons fire. This opposition was silenced by U. S. artillery and mortars, however, and when the Army units halted for the night there still was no firm contact with the enemy.

¹⁶ On 4 Nov the Lunga perimeter had been reorganized, this time in two sectors. Gen Rupertus took the sector east of the Lunga, Gen Sebree the sector west of the river.

Action on 6 November likewise failed to fix the Japanese in solid opposition, although the 7th Marines crossed the Nalimbiu and moved eastward along the coast, and the 164th Infantry found an abandoned enemy bivouac farther inland. Meanwhile, Company B of the 8th Marines, just ashore on the island, moved east to join the attacking forces as did regimental headquarters and the Antitank and C Companies of the 164th Infantry. The combined force then advanced to positions a mile west of the Metapona River and there dug in for the night, the Marines near the beach to guard against an expected Japanese landing that did not materialize.

Unknown to Marines and Army commanders, the situation was shifting because of new changes in the Japanese plans. During the night of 5–6 November the enemy began to retire eastward from positions facing the Marines across the Nalimbiu, and when the U. S. force stopped west of the Metapona the Japanese were east of the river preparing rear guard defensive positions that would aid a general withdrawal. General Hyakutake and Admiral Yamamoto on 3 or 4 November had changed their plans about hitting the Lunga perimeter from two sides, and the idea of an airfield at Koli Point was abandoned. Shoji was to return overland to Kokumbona where he would join the main elements of the *Seventeenth Army's* buildup on the west.¹⁷

After remaining in positions to guard against the expected landing throughout 7 November, the U. S. forces under Generals Rupertus and Sebree advanced eastward again on the 8th. Patrols had located the Japanese near the coast just east

of Gavaga Creek, a stream some 2,000 yards east of the Metapona River. The 2d Battalion, 164th Infantry was attached to the 7th Marines as regimental reserve, and the combined forces moved rapidly to surround the Japanese. During the advance General Rupertus retired from the action with an attack of dengue fever, and Vandegrift placed General Sebree in command of the entire operation. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines met stiff resistance, and four Marines were killed while 31, including Lieutenant Colonel Puller, were wounded. Major John E. Weber next day succeeded to command of this battalion.

Hanneken's 2/7 moved around the Japanese to take up positions east of the creek with its right flank on the beach. The 2d Battalion of the 164th Infantry, committed from reserve, tied in on 2/7's left (inland) flank, straddled Gavaga Creek south of the Japanese, and tied in with the right flank of the 1st Battalion 7th Marines. From this point 1/7 extended north to the beach along the west side of the Japanese positions, and the ring was closed on the enemy. With this action to the east thus stabilized, division called for the return of the 164th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) and Company B of the 8th Marines. Vandegrift planned to resume the western action toward Kokumbona.

On 9 November the 7th Marines and 2/164 began attacks to reduce the Gavaga Creek pocket. Supported by 155mm guns, two pack howitzer batteries, and aircraft, the two Marine battalions closed in from east and west while the soldiers of the Army battalion moved north to compress the Japanese into the beach area. The Japanese fought bitterly to break out of the trap, especially to the south through a gap where Companies E (on the right)

¹⁷ *Yamamoto Interrogation*, 470.

and F of the 164th Infantry were unable to make contact across the swampy creek. This action continued through 10 November, with repeated orders by General Seebree for 2/164 to close the gap across the creek. This was not done, however, and the commander of 2/164 was relieved on 10 November.

During the night of 11-12 November most of the enemy escaped along the creek to the south. On 12 November the three battalions swept through the area where the Japanese had been trapped, met little opposition, and withdrew that afternoon across the Metapona River. Marines estimated that the action had cost the enemy approximately 450 dead. About 40 Americans were killed and 120 wounded.

Meanwhile, Colonel Carlson and his raiders, traveling cross-country to Koli Point, encountered the rear elements of the retiring Japanese. Joined by his Companies B and F, as well as elements of Company D, Carlson concentrated his battalion inland near the native village of Binu and patrolled the surrounding area. During the afternoon of 12 November the raiders beat off five attacks by two Japanese companies. Scattered actions took place for the next five days, and on 17 November the main Japanese force began withdrawing into the inland hills to skirt south of Henderson Field to Kokumbona. Carlson pursued, was augmented by the arrival of his Company A and by native bearers, and remained in the jungle and ridges until 4 December. His combat and reconnaissance patrol covered 150 miles, fought more than a dozen actions and killed nearly 500 enemy soldiers. Raiders lost 16 killed and 18 wounded.

Admiral Tanaka had now been placed in charge of a larger Japanese reinforce-

ment fleet, and Admiral Mikawa of the *Eighth Fleet* had stepped up his plans for the buildup on the west side of the Marine perimeter. On the night of 7 November Tanaka sent Captain Torajiro Sato and his *Destroyer Division 15* down The Slot with an advance unit of some 1,300 troops. After evading a U. S. bomber attack in the afternoon, these ships landed the troops at Tassafaronga shortly after midnight and then sped back north to the safety of the Shortlands. While these ships came north, the second shuttle went south from Rabaul to the Shortlands with the main body of the *38th Division*. Two days later (on 10 November) 600 of these troops under Lieutenant General Tadayoshi Sano made the move from the Shortlands to Guadalcanal. The convoy was heckled by U. S. planes and PT boats, but the troops were landed safely, and the ships made it back to the Shortlands on 11 November.¹⁸

BRIEF RENEWAL OF WESTERN ATTACK

Meanwhile Colonel Arthur's 2d Marines (less 3/2), augmented by the 8th Marines and the 164th Infantry (less 2/164), pushed west from Point Cruz toward Kokumbona on 10 November. The force advanced against ragged opposition from infantry weapons and by 11 November had regained most of the ground that had been given up when Vandegrift shifted his attacks to the east earlier in the month.

General Hyakutake, to thwart this thrust at his Guadalcanal command post, assigned Major General Takeo Ito (formerly CO of the *228th Infantry* and now infantry group commander of the *38th*

¹⁸ *Tanaka Article*, II, 820.

Division) to maneuver inland and flank the American advance.

But before Ito could strike—and before the Americans were aware of his threat—General Vandegrift again had to call off the western attack. On 11 November the troops pulled back across the Matanikau, destroyed their bridges, and resumed positions around the Lunga perimeter. Intelligence sources had become aware of the plans of Hyakutake and Yamamoto to mount another strong counteroffensive, and Vandegrift wanted all hands available.

DECISION AT SEA

It did indeed appear that the Lunga perimeter would need all the strength it could muster. Rabaul was nearly ready for a showdown, winner take all, and the time was now or never. The Japanese were losing their best pilots in this Solomons action, and shipping casualties likewise were beginning to tell. At the same time Allied strength in the South Pacific was slowly growing. It was becoming an awkward battle, and Japan was spending altogether too much time and material on this minor outpost which never had borne much intrinsic value. This needless loss had to be stopped, and Admiral Yamamoto was determined that the new counteroffensive would not be botched.

At 1800 on 12 November Admiral Tanaka's flagship, the destroyer *Hayashio*, headed out of the Shortlands leading the convoy which carried the main body of the *38th Division*.¹⁹ Elsewhere in these Solomon waters two Japanese bombardment forces also made for Guadalcanal. Admiral Yamamoto had ordered them to

hammer Henderson Field while Tanaka landed the soldiers. Yet a third Japanese flotilla ranged the Solomons in general support. Nothing was to prevent the *38th Division* from landing with its heavy equipment and weapons. The troops would be put ashore between Cape Esperance and Tassafaronga.²⁰

On 23 November the 8th Marines passed through the 164th Infantry to attack the Japanese positions steadily throughout the day. Again there was no gain, and the American force dug in to hold the line confronting the strong Japanese positions. There the action halted for the time with the forces facing each other at close quarters. The 1st Marine Division was due for relief from the Guadalcanal area, and more troops could not be allotted for the western action.

On 29 November Admiral King approved the relief of Vandegrift's division by the 25th Infantry Division then en route from Hawaii to Australia. This division was to be short-stopped at Guadalcanal and the Marines would go to Australia.

During the period that preceded the withdrawal of the 1st Division, the last naval action of the campaign was fought off Tassafaronga. Shortly after midnight of 29 November the Japanese attempted to supply their troops in that area, and an American task force of five cruisers and six destroyers moved to block the attempt.

The American force, under the command of Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, surprised the Japanese force of eight destroyers, but the enemy ships loosed a spread of torpedoes before retiring. One Japanese destroyer was sunk,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Yamamoto Interrogation*, 470.

but the U. S. lost the cruiser *Northampton*, and three others, the *Minneapolis*, *New Orleans*, and *Pensacola*, were seriously damaged.

But Japan's day of smooth sailing in The Slot was over. With a reinforced submarine fleet of 24 boats, Admiral Halsey's command had been prowling the route of the Tokyo Express to destroy or damage several enemy transports. The Japanese edge in fighting ships also was becoming less impressive. In addition to the carrier *Enterprise*, Halsey had available two battleships, three heavy and one light cruisers, a light antiaircraft cruiser, and 22 destroyers organized in two task forces.

The strength of the Lunga perimeter was likewise much improved since the Japanese attacks of late October. Arrival of fresh troops enabled an extension of defensive positions west to the Matanikau and the establishment of a stronger line along the southern (inland) portions of the infantry ring around Henderson Field. These new positions plus the shooting by the 155mm guns kept Pistol Pete from carefree hammering at the airfield and beach areas.

And the perimeter was to grow even stronger. More planes were becoming available to Henderson fliers, bombers from the south were able to provide more support for the Solomons area, and another regiment from the Americal Division was ready to move in from New Caledonia. Colonel Daniel W. Hogan's 182d Infantry (less 3d Battalion) sailed from Noumea in the afternoon of 8 November on board Admiral Turner's four transports. Admiral Kinkaid with the *Enterprise*, two battleships, two cruisers, and eight destroyers would protect the transports, and all available aircraft in the

area would cover the troop movement. A day later (9 November) Admiral Scott sailed from Espiritu Santo with a supply run for Guadalcanal, and a day after that Admiral Callaghan followed with his five cruisers and ten destroyers.

Early on 11 November (the day Vandegrift called off his western advance) Scott's transports arrived off Lunga Road to begin unloading. Enemy bombers twice interrupted the operations, and damaged the *Betelgeuse*, *Libra*, and *Zeilin*. Damage to the latter ship was serious, and she was mothered back to Espiritu Santo by a destroyer. The other two transports retired at 1800 to Indispensable Strait between Guadalcanal and Malaita, and later joined Turner's transports. During the night Admiral Callaghan patrolled the waters of Sealark Channel.

Turner's transports with the 182d Infantry arrived at dawn on 12 November to begin unloading troops and cargo. During the morning the *Betelgeuse* and *Libra* drew fire from near Kokumbona. The two ships escaped damage, however, and American counterbattery and naval gunfire silenced the Japanese. Unloading ceased in the afternoon, and the ships were flushed into dispersion by an attack of about 31 torpedo bombers. The transports escaped unscathed, but Callaghan's flagship *San Francisco* and the destroyer *Buchanan* were damaged. Only one Japanese bomber survived the American antiaircraft fire and air action, and unloading resumed two hours later.

Meanwhile, intelligence reports plotted the Japanese fleet closing in on the Guadalcanal area. During the morning American patrol planes north of Malaita had spotted a Japanese force of two battleships, one cruiser, and six destroyers. Later five destroyers were observed 200

miles north-northwest. By midafternoon another sighting placed two carriers and a brace of destroyers some 250 miles to the west.²¹ Coastwatchers in the upper Solomons logged other sightings. Turner appraised the various reports at two battleships, two to four heavy cruisers, and ten to twelve destroyers. Callaghan was heavily outweighed. But Halsey's orders were to get the naval support of Guadalcanal out of the dark back alleys of the South Pacific; and after he shepherded the unloaded transports south to open water, Callaghan turned back to engage the enemy.

Japanese battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima*, light cruiser *Nagara*, and 15 destroyers steamed south to deliver Admiral Yamamoto's first blow of the new counteroffensive. This bombardment group was to enter Sealark Channel and hammer Henderson Field and the fighter strip to uselessness so that Cactus air could not bother General Hyakutake's reinforcements en route. This Japanese mission gave Callaghan one slight advantage. For shore bombardment, the Imperial battleships carried high explosive projectiles for their 14-inch guns, not armor-piercing shells which would have been much more effective against the hulls of U. S. cruisers.

Near Savo Island at 0124 on 13 November, cruiser *Helena* raised the Japanese in radar blips at a range of 27,000 yards, and she warned the flagship that the enemy was approaching between Savo and Cape Esperance. But radar on the *San Francisco* was inadequate, and Callaghan could not determine the exact positions of his own or the enemy ships. The

admiral therefore delayed action until he was sure of the situation. By that time the range had closed to about 2,500 yards, and the van destroyer of the American force was nearly within the Japanese formation. When they maneuvered to launch torpedoes, the American ships disorganized their formation, and they took up independent firing. Some swerved off course to avoid collision, and in the melee both American and Japanese ships fired at their sister craft.

The *San Francisco* caught 15 solid hits from big Japanese guns and was forced to withdraw with Admiral Callaghan killed and others, including Captain Cassin Young, her skipper, dead or fatally wounded. A cruiser hit on the *Atlanta* killed Admiral Scott and set fire to the ship. But the small American force held in spite of heavy losses, and by 0300 the Japanese group retired without being able to attempt its bombardment mission. The Imperial bombardment force had lost two destroyers and four others were damaged. The battleship *Hiei* limped away damaged by more than 80 American hits.

For the American ships it was a costly victory. Henderson Field had been protected, but the antiaircraft cruisers *Atlanta* and *Juneau* sank in the channel along with destroyers *Barton*, *Cushing*, *Monssen*, and *Laffey*. In addition to Callaghan's flagship, heavy cruiser *Portland* also was seriously damaged as were destroyers *Sterrett* and *Aaron Ward*. Destroyer *O'Bannon* sustained minor concussion to her sound gear. These ships struggled back to the New Hebrides after daybreak on 13 November. Of the 13 American ships in the action only destroyer *Fletcher* escaped damage.

Planes from Henderson Field took off at first light on 13 November to nip the

²¹ A faulty report. Carriers were not in the area. *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 235.

heels of the retiring Japanese ships. They found the crippled battleship *Hiei* afire near Savo, and bombed and strafed her throughout the day. The Japanese fought a losing battle to salvage their hapless ship, but they had to scuttle her next day (14 November).

During the night battle off Guadalcanal, Admiral Tanaka had been ordered to lead his convoy back to the Shortlands. He headed south again from there during the afternoon of 13 November at about the same time that Admiral Halsey ordered Kinkaid to withdraw the carrier *Enterprise* south with the remnants of Callaghan's force. Halsey wanted this carrier—the South Pacific's sole operational flattop—safely out of Japanese aircraft range. To guard Henderson Field, Admiral Lee would steam on north with his battleships *Washington* and *South Dakota* and four destroyers from Kinkaid's task force. The distance was too great for Lee to make that night, however, and only the Tulagi PT boats were available to protect Sealark Channel. Shortly after midnight Japanese cruisers and destroyers entered the channel and shelled the Cactus airfield for about half an hour. There was no serious damage, however. At dawn on 14 November the Henderson fliers found their field still operational.

Early search flights found Admiral Tanaka's convoy heading down The Slot some 150 miles away and the bombardment cruisers and destroyers retiring north. In spite of the fact that the shelling of Henderson Field had been ineffective, Tanaka was coming on down to Guadalcanal with the 10,000 troops of the 38th Division's 229th and 230th Regiments, artillery personnel, engineers, other replacements, and some 10,000 tons of supplies.

First Cactus attacks struck the retiring warships which had shelled Henderson during the night. Ground crews on the field hand-loaded their planes and visiting craft from the *Enterprise* with fuel and ordnance, and the planes mounted from the muddy runways in attack. They damaged Japanese heavy cruiser *Kinugasa* and the light *Isuzu*. Planes still on the *Enterprise*, now 200 miles southeast of Guadalcanal, also attacked the Japanese warships. They added to the troubles of the *Kinugasa* and *Isuzu*, and also damaged heavy cruisers *Chokai* and *Maya* and destroyer *Michishio*.

Meanwhile, the 11 troop transports steamed on down The Slot until by about 1130 they were north of the Russells and near Savo. A previous light attack by *Enterprise* fliers had inflicted little damage to this convoy, but at 1150 seven torpedo bombers and 18 dive bombers from Henderson were refueled, rearmed, and boring in for an attack. This strike hulled several of the transports. About an hour later 17 fighter-escorted dive bombers delivered the second concentrated American attack on the transports and sank one of them. Next turn went to 15 B-17's that had left Espiritu Santo at 1018. They struck at 1430 from an altitude of 16,000 feet and scored one hit and several near misses with their 15 tons of explosives.

These attacks continued all day as the Henderson fliers scurried back and forth from their field. Nine transports were hit, and seven of them sunk. But from these sinking ships, some 5,000 men were rescued by destroyers. As Admiral Tanaka described the day:

The toll of my force was extremely heavy. Steaming at high speed the destroyers had laid smoke screens almost continuously and delivered

a tremendous volume of antiaircraft fire. Crews were near exhaustion. The remaining transports had spent most of the day in evasive action, zigzagging at high speed, and were now scattered in all directions.

In detail the picture is now vague, but the general effect is indelible in my mind of bombs wobbling down from high-flying B-17's, of carrier bombers roaring toward targets as though to plunge full into the water, releasing bombs and pulling out barely in time; each miss sending up towering columns of mist and spray; every hit raising clouds of smoke and fire as transports burst into flame and take the sickening list that spells their doom. Attacks depart, smoke screens lift and reveal the tragic scene of men jumping overboard from burning, sinking ships. Ships regrouped each time the enemy withdrew, but precious time was wasted and the advance delayed.²²

In spite of this disastrous day, Tanaka steamed on south in his flagship, doggedly leading transports *Kinugawa Maru*, *Yamatsuki Maru*, *Hirokawa Maru*, and *Yamaura Maru* on toward Guadalcanal. These ships and three destroyers from *Destroyer Division 15* which continued to escort him were the only sound vessels Tanaka had at sundown that day—" . . . a sorry remnant of the force that had sortied from Shortland."²³ But what was worse, Tanaka then got the word that a strong U. S. task force appeared to be waiting for him at Guadalcanal. This was Admiral Lee's force, then some 100 miles southwest of Guadalcanal, but Japanese intelligence reported these ships to Tanaka as four cruisers and four destroyers. To counter this threat, headquarters at Rabaul ordered Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo to hurry down and run interference for Tanaka with a fighting force which included the battleship *Kirishima*, heavy cruisers *Atoga* and *Takao*,

light cruisers *Sendai* and *Nagara*, and an entire destroyer squadron. Kondo was to complete the Henderson Field knockout which Admiral Callaghan's force had thwarted two nights earlier.

Throughout the day Admiral Lee likewise sifted intelligence reports which funneled into his flagship, the battleship *Washington*. Then he moved against this powerful Tokyo Express which was headed his way.²³ Lee entered Sealark Channel at about 2100 on 14 November and patrolled the waters around Savo. An hour before midnight, radar indicated a Japanese ship (the cruiser *Sendai*) nine miles to the north. About 12 minutes later the target was visible by main battery director telescopes and Lee ordered captains of the *Washington* and the *South Dakota* to fire when ready. Their first salvos prompted the *Sendai* to turn out of range.

Shortly before this Admiral Tanaka, still leading his four transports south toward Guadalcanal, had been much relieved to see Admiral Kondo's *Second Fleet* in front of him in The Slot. But when the cruiser *Sendai* scurried back from this first brief brush with the American ships, the Japanese officers found that for the first time in the Pacific war they were up against U. S. battleships, and not just cruisers as they had expected.

Tanaka immediately ordered his three escorting destroyers—the *Destroyer Division 15* ships commanded by Captain

²² The American admiral also moved against some powerful naval thinking. Many officers at ComSoPac headquarters "doubted the wisdom of committing two new 16-inch battleships to waters so restricted as those around Savo Island, but Admiral Halsey felt he must throw in everything at this crisis. And he granted Lee complete freedom of action upon reaching Guadalcanal." *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, 272.

²² Tanaka Article, II, 822.

²³ *Ibid.*

Torajiro Sato—into the fight, and the admiral then turned his transports north and shepherded them beyond range of the impending action. Meanwhile Admiral Kondo's fleet closed for the fight, and soon the American destroyers leading Admiral Lee's formation came within visual range of some of these ships. The U. S. destroyers got the worst of the bargain. By 2330 all four of them were out of action: the *Walke* afire and sinking, the *Benham* limping away, the *Preston* gutted by fire that caused her abandonment later, and the *Gwin* damaged by a shell in her engine room. Only one Japanese destroyer, the *Ayarami*, had been damaged.

The two U. S. battleships continued northwest between Savo and Cape Esperance. The *South Dakota*, turning to avoid the burning destroyer *Preston*, came within range of the Japanese ships which had just scuffled with the American destroyers, and the word passed by these Japanese ships brought their "big brothers" out from the shelter of Savo's northwest coast.

Admiral Kondo steamed into the fight with destroyers *Asagumo* and *Teruzuki* in the van followed by heavy cruisers *Atago* and *Takao*, and the battleship *Kirishima* in the wake.

The *South Dakota*, partially blind because of a power failure that hampered her radar, soon came within 5,000 yards of the Japanese who illuminated her with their searchlights and opened fire. Almost at once the *Washington* blasted her 16-inch main batteries at the enemy battleship about 8,000 yards away.

The *Kirishima* took nine 16-inch hits and nearly half a hundred 5-inch wounds in less than ten minutes, and she staggered away in flames. Japanese cruisers *Atago*

and *Takao*, revealed by their own searchlights, also were damaged. But the original Japanese onslaught had caused enough serious damage to the *South Dakota* to force her to retire, also.

Admiral Lee continued on a northwesterly course to divert the Japanese, then bore away to the southwest near the Russells, and finally retired from the area when he noted the Japanese likewise withdrawing. The enemy battleship *Kirishima* was abandoned as was the destroyer *Ayanami*. American destroyer *Benham* likewise had to be abandoned later.

With his escorting destroyers dispersed by this battle and its aftermath, Admiral Tanaka now was alone in his flagship *Hayashio* with the four transports. He made full speed for Tassafaronga, but it was clear to him that the transports would not be able to unload before daylight. After that the U. S. planes would attack them like they had those six transports which tried to unload during daylight in October. But these men were critically needed on Guadalcanal, Tanaka knew. He sent a message to Admiral Mikawa at *Eighth Fleet* headquarters and asked if he could run the transports aground on the beach to insure prompt unloading. Admiral Mikawa said "No." But Admiral Kondo, disengaging his *Second Fleet* from the battle with Lee's battleships, contacted Tanaka and told him to go ahead with this plan.

By now the early light of dawn was turning Sealark Channel a slick gray, and Tanaka followed Admiral Kondo's message of approval. He ordered the four transports to run aground off the landing beaches, and after he watched them head for shore the admiral turned

north, gathered up his destroyers again and sailed through the waters east of Savo Island.²⁴

The admiral wrote later:

Daylight brought the expected aerial assaults on our grounded transports which were soon in flames from direct bomb hits. I later learned that all troops, light arms, ammunition, and part of the provisions were landed successfully.²⁵

Two guns of the 244th Coast Artillery Battalion and the 5-inch guns of the 3d Defense Battalion also contributed to the damage of the grounded transports. This fire hit two of the ships, and then the American destroyer *Meade* came over from Tulagi to enter the fight. Planes from Henderson Field and Espiritu Santo soon joined this grisly "Buzzard Patrol," and the Japanese transports were reduced to useless hulks engulfed in flames. Japanese plans for a big November counteroffensive had met disaster, and Imperial headquarters now began to think seriously about the more cautious plan to pull the line back closer to Rabaul. There now were some 10,000 new Japanese troops on Guadalcanal, but these recent sea and air actions made it clear to the Japanese that these troops could not be supplied or reinforced on a regular basis. The shipping score against the Japanese scratched two battleships, a cruiser, three destroyers, and 11 transports. Nine other ships had been damaged.

American losses numbered one light cruiser, two light antiaircraft cruisers, and seven destroyers. Seven other U. S. ships were damaged. But the Tokyo Express had been derailed. Never again was Japan able to reinforce significantly with night runs from Rabaul. From this point

the Imperial force on the island began to dwindle²⁶ while the American command continued to grow. Critical November had turned into decisive November, in the Pacific War as well as the Guadalcanal Battle. The Japanese never again advanced and the Allies never stopped.

Admiral Tanaka, whose skillful conduct of the convoy and aggressiveness in throwing his four escorting destroyers into the battle against Admiral Lee's force near Savo had contributed most to what limited success the Japanese had had during this harrowing month, summed it up this way:

The last large-scale effort to reinforce Guadalcanal had ended. My concern and trepidation about the entire venture had been proven well founded. As convoy commander I felt a heavy responsibility.²⁷

BACK TOWARD KOKUMBONA

With this Japanese attempt to reinforce General Hyakutake decisively stopped, the American ground advance to the west was resumed. General Sebree, western sector commander, would be in command. With the troops of his sector—the 164th Infantry, the 8th Marines, and two battalions of the 182d Infantry—the general planned to secure a line of departure extending from Point Cruz inland for about 1,700 yards. From this line the attack would press on to Kokumbona and the Poha River where the main Japanese force was concentrated.

²⁶ Capt Ohmae said later: "Following the [naval] battle, it was decided to do as much as we could by reinforcing the Guadalcanal Garrison by destroyers, while a sufficient supporting force of aircraft was built up in Rabaul. This plan was not too successful." *Ohmae Interrogation*, 471.

²⁷ *Tanaka Article*, II, 824.

²⁴ *Tanaka Article*, II, 823-824.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 824.

The 2d Battalion of the 182d Infantry crossed the Matanikau on 18 November and took up positions on the south (inland) flank of the proposed line of departure. On the following day the 1st Battalion of the same regiment moved west to take up the right flank position at the base of Point Cruz. Company B of the 8th Marines screened the left flank of 1/182's advance, and these two units met sporadic infantry opposition. About noon the Army battalion halted, dug in, and refused its inland flank. The screening Marine company withdrew to rejoin its regiment east of the Matanikau. A gap of more than 1,000 yards separated the two battalions of the 182d Infantry.

Meanwhile, the Japanese deployed for a local offensive action of their own. With the 38th *Division* troops who had been on the island, plus those few brought ashore from the ill-fated transports, the Japanese moved east to force a Matanikau bridgehead from which a new attack at the Lunga perimeter could be launched. Other elements of the 38th *Division* moved

inland to occupy the Mount Austen area. Remnants of the battered 2d *Division* were held in Kokumbona.

On the night of 19-20 November, the Japanese took up positions facing the two Army battalions west of the river and engaged the Americans with artillery and mortar fire. At dawn (20 November) the Japanese struck the inland flank of 1/182. The Army troops gave ground for approximately 400 yards, but this was regained later in the morning with air and artillery support. This U. S. attack continued to the beach just west of Point Cruz, but halted there in the face of increased enemy artillery and mortar fire.

During the night the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 164th Infantry moved into the gap between the two battalions of the 182d, and a general American attack jumped off on the morning of 21 November. Strong Japanese positions fronting the 164th held the attempt to no gain, however, and a second attack on the morning of 22 November likewise was halted.

Final Period, 9 December 1942 to 9 February 1943

CHANGE OF COMMAND

At the Noumea conference with Admiral Halsey in October, General Vandegrift stressed the need for getting the 1st Marine Division to a healthier climate. But at that time the Japanese counter-offensive was underway, and another enemy effort against the Lunga perimeter began shortly after this October attack was turned back. Troops could not be spared from Guadalcanal during that period, and sea lanes to the area were too hazardous for a rapid buildup of the island garrison. It was not until after the important naval actions of November that sufficient reinforcements could be brought in to relieve the 1st Marine Division. By that time it was clear to all that these veterans needed to be taken out of the jungle.

Compared to later actions in the Pacific, casualties in the division had not been excessive. From the landing early in August 1942 until relief in December, the division lost 605 officers and men killed in action, 45 who died of wounds, 31 listed as missing and presumed dead, and 1,278 wounded in action.¹ But unhealthy conditions in the jungle were, statistically, a greater hazard than the enemy. While 1,959 Marines of the division became cas-

ualties to enemy action, 8,580 fell prey at one time or another to malaria and other tropical diseases.

Records make it impossible to separate these two totals. Many men with malaria were hospitalized more than once and thus added to the total as cases rather than as individuals. Some of these later were killed or wounded in action. But on the other hand many suffered from a milder form of malaria or other illness and did not turn in at the hospital at all. It became a rule of thumb in front-line units that unless one had a temperature of more than 103 degrees there would be no light duty or excuse from a patrol mission. The tropics weakened nearly everyone. Food had been in short supply during the early weeks of the campaign, much of the fare had been substandard, and most of the long-time veterans of the fighting suffered some form of malnutrition.

On 7 and 8 December, men in one of the division's regiments were examined by Navy doctors who thus sought to assess the physical condition of the division. The doctors concluded that 34 per cent of the regiment was unfit for any duty which might involve combat. This percentage would have been higher but for the recent inclusion within the regiment of 400 replacements.

Plans for the operation called for the Marines to be relieved early and reorganized for a new assault mission else-

¹ These figures refer to organic units only; such reinforcing attachments as the 3DefBn, 1st RdrBn, and the 1st PrchtBn are not included in these statistics.

where. This could not be, however, and the Marines who held out in the Lunga perimeter during the dark early days deserved a break. They had taken America's first offensive step against long odds, and they had held out against strong Japanese attacks when Guadalcanal was all but cut off from Allied support. For this they were awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and—what was to be immediately more satisfying to the survivors—a rehabilitation and training period in Australia. The 2d Marines, also on hand for the original landing, was to be sent to New Zealand.

On 9 December 1942, command of the troops ashore on Guadalcanal passed from General Vandegrift to Major General Alexander M. Patch, commanding general of the Americal Division and senior Army officer present. On the same day the 1st Marine Division began to embark for Australia. The 5th Marines sailed that day, followed at intervals of a few days by division headquarters personnel, the 1st Marines and, after a longer interval, by the 7th Marines. The command of General Patch included Henderson Field, the fighter strip, the Tulagi area and seaplane base there, as well as the Guadalcanal perimeter. Although withdrawal of the 1st Marine Division meant that strong actions against the Japanese had to be temporarily suspended, reinforcements began to arrive concurrently with the departure of the Marines.

The third infantry regiment of General Patch's division, the 132d Regimental Combat Team (less 1st Battalion and Battery A, 247th Field Artillery Battalion) arrived on 8 December.² With this ar-

rival the Army division numbered 13,169 men—more than 3,000 short of full strength. The 164th Infantry, in action since the October fighting on Bloody Ridge, was in little better shape than the 1st Marine Division regiments. Both this regiment and the 182d Infantry were each understrength by about 860 men.

Major General J. Lawton Collins' 25th Division, bound from Hawaii to New Caledonia, was diverted directly to Guadalcanal where its 35th Infantry Regiment landed on 17 December, the 27th Infantry on 1 January, and the 161st Infantry on 4 January. Also on 4 January, the 6th Marines (Colonel Gilder T. Jackson) and division headquarters of the 2d Marine Division landed from New Zealand to join their other regiments, the 2d and 8th Marines. Brigadier General Alphonse De Carre, the ADC, acted as division commander while this division was on Guadalcanal, and also served as commander of all other Marine ground units. Major General John Marston, commanding general of the 2d Marine Division, remained in New Zealand because he was senior to General Patch, the Army officer who now was in command at Guadalcanal.³

as were other elements of the division. Widely separated in their New Caledonia camps, the units operated together as a division for the first time on Guadalcanal. Other divisional units included the 221st, 245th, and 247th FA Bns; the 57th EngCBn; the 101st QM Regt; the 101st Med Regt; the 26th SigCo and the Mobile CReconSqn.

² LtGen Holcomb, Marine Commandant, later expressed the opinion that Marston should have had the opportunity to command his division in spite of his seniority over Patch. CMC ltr to MajGen C. B. Vogel, 12Feb43. Marston said he was never apprised of the Commandant's attitude, however. MajGen J. Marston ltr to CMC, 30Dec48.

³ This division's other infantry regiments, the 164th and the 182d, already were on Guadalcanal



37MM GUNS of Americal Division antitank units are landed on the beach at Guadalcanal as Army troops arrive to relieve 1st Division Marines. (SC 164902)



SHOVING OFF as relieving troops arrive, weary men of the 1st Marine Division file on board landing craft and leave the Guadalcanal battle behind. (USMC 52978)

By 7 January arrival of additional replacements had placed Guadalcanal's combined air, ground, and naval forces at about 50,000. The 2d Marine Division now had a strength of 14,733; the Americal Division, 16,000; the 25th Division, 12,629. This was a manpower level beyond even the dreams of the early Lunga defenders, and, with the South Pacific air and naval power also growing, the Allies at last were able to lay plans for attacks that would defeat the Japanese on the island and keep reinforcement landings to a minimum.

With Guadalcanal clearly out of the shoestring category at last, General Harmon on 2 January designated the Guadalcanal-Tulagi command as XIV Corps. General Patch became corps commander and General Sebree, former Americal ADC, assumed command of that division.⁴

A month and a half earlier than this, on 15 November, installations of the Cactus Air Force also had gained a more dignified title. On that date Rear Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch, who had relieved Admiral McCain as ComAirSoPac, designated Henderson Field and Fighter 1 a Marine Corps Air Base, and Colonel William J. Fox became base commander. On 1 December and 30 January two new engineering units came in to improve the air facilities on Guadalcanal. On the earlier date, Major Thomas F. Riley's 1st Marine

Aviation Engineer Battalion relieved the 6th Seabees, and on the January date Major Chester Clark's 2d Marine Aviation Engineer Battalion arrived. These were the only units of their kind within the Marine Corps, and, together with the remaining Seabees plus the organic engineer battalions of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions, they kept the airfields in shape.

Part of this work included construction of a new strip, Fighter 2, closer to the beach near Kukum. Fighter 1, always unusually slow to dry adequately after tropical rains, was abandoned when this new strip became operational, about the middle of December. Both Henderson and Fighter 2 then were built up with coral for better drainage, and steel Marston mats, now becoming available, also were laid on the runways. Tools still were scarce, however, and the old Japanese road rollers, for example, continued to be used.

Brigadier General Louis E. Woods, who had relieved General Geiger at Cactus on 7 November so the wing commander could return to his headquarters at Espiritu Santo, stayed on as Commander Aircraft, Cactus Air Force until 26 December when he in turn was relieved by Brigadier General Francis P. Mulcahy, commanding general of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. Colonel William O. Brice succeeded Colonel Albert D. Cooley as strike commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Samuel S. Jack became fighter commander after Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Bauer was lost to enemy action on 15 November.

By 20 November there were 100 planes on the Guadalcanal fields. This figure included 35 F4F-4's, 24 SBD's, 17 P-38's, 16 P-39's, 8 TBF's, and one lone and battle-scarred P-400. At about this time also, B-17's from two merged Army Air Force

⁴"The XIV Corps's staff section chiefs assumed their duties on 5 January 1943, but most of the posts at XIV Corps headquarters were manned by Americal Division staff officers . . . [who] . . . acted simultaneously . . . as assistant staff section chiefs for the Corps. As late as 1 February 1943 XIV Corps headquarters consisted of only eleven officers and two enlisted men." *Miller, Guadalcanal*, 218-219.

Bomber Groups (the 11th and the 5th) began to operate through Guadalcanal on long-range reconnaissance missions. On 23 November six OS2U's came in to run antisubmarine patrols; on 26 November the 3d Reconnaissance Squadron of the Royal New Zealand Air Force arrived with its Lockheed Hudsons, and during the period 15 to 25 December night patrolling PBY's of VP-12 arrived. Also during December the Army sent in the 12th, 68th, and 70th Fighter Squadrons and the 69th Bombardment Squadron of B-26's.

This additional air strength enabled the Allies to maintain the upper hand they had gained over the Tokyo Express and Rabaul fliers. Japanese commanders pointed up their loss of pilots as the most serious trouble resulting from the fighting around Guadalcanal, and several Japanese officers, including Captain Ohmae, list this loss as the turning point at Guadalcanal and therefore the turning point in the Pacific war.⁵ Ohmae said later:

We were able to land a number of troops and supplies [on Guadalcanal], but our air losses were too great. Almost all of the Navy's first class pilots and a few of the Army's were lost in the Solomon Operations. The greatest portion of these were lost against Guadalcanal. At one time, we had three or four squadrons at Rabaul, but they were sent down one at a time. The constant attrition was very expensive. The 21st, 24th, 25th and 26th Air Groups were lost. This loss was keenly felt in the defense of the empire during the Marshall-Gilbert campaign.

In 1943, our training program began to be restricted, so we were never able to replace these losses, although we still had a number of carriers. In January 1943, due to your increased strength and our difficulty in supplying Guadalcanal, it was necessary for us to withdraw.⁶

⁵ Ohmae *Interrogation*, 471.

⁶ *Ibid.*

GENERAL SITUATION

The U. S. forces had not been idle during December. The perimeter now extended west along the beach to Point Cruz, south to Hill 66 (nearly 2,000 yards inland from the beach at Point Cruz) where it was refused east to the Matanikau to join the former Lunga perimeter outpost line east of that river. There was little expansion to the east, but a separate American force held Koli Point outside the main perimeter.

The Aola Bay force, finally giving up airfield construction there because of swampy, unsuitable terrain, moved early in December to Koli Point where a field later was built. This force, still under the command of Colonel Tuttle, now included the colonel's 147th Infantry, the 9th Marine Defense Battalion, the 18th Naval Construction Battalion (Seabees), and elements of the 246th Field Artillery Battalion.

The limited offensive toward Kokumbona was halted late in November when the Japanese tried to mount a second strong counteroffensive against the perimeter, and at that time a Japanese movement to build up forces in the Mount Austen area was noted. Now, early in December, it seemed advisable to concentrate on this important piece of terrain as a prelude to a general corps offensive which would be launched when more troops became available.⁷ The high ground just to

⁷ Mount Austen was the "Grassy Knoll" the 1st Marine Division (planning at New Zealand with faulty maps) hoped to take early in the landing phase of the campaign. The importance of this terrain feature as a key to the security of Henderson Field had been recognized throughout the Guadalcanal planning and fighting. Gen Vandegrift's Marines patrolled the area repeatedly, but never had enough manpower to hold the ground permanently.

the south above Henderson Field had to be cleared before many troops went west along the north coast to drive the Japanese beyond Kokumbona. The enemy line from Point Cruz inland was dug in for a determined stand, and Japanese strength was again mounting in the Bismarcks.

On 2 December, General Hitoshi Imamura, commander of the Japanese *Eighth Area Army*, arrived in Rabaul to assume command of the enemy's South Pacific area and what was left of General Hyakutake's *Seventeenth Army*. Imamura had been ordered down from Japan to retake Guadalcanal, and for this job he brought along 50,000 men for his *Eighth Area Army*. Hyakutake remained on Guadalcanal where his troops were disposed generally from Point Cruz inland to Mount Austen, facing the American line west of the Matanikau. The rear areas, and the bulk of Hyakutake's support troops, extended from the Point Cruz line west to Cape Esperance. This Japanese force included remnants of the *2d Division* (General Maruyama), *38th Division* (General Sano), and the *Kawaguchi* and *Ichiki Forces*. (See Map 26, Map Section)

Confronting the Americans on his left flank from Point Cruz inland to Hill 66, General Hyakutake had troops of Maruyama's *2d Division* composed of the *4th*, *16th*, and *29th Regiments*. From this division's right (inland) flank were the *1st* and *3rd Battalions* of the *228th Infantry* on high ground west of the Matanikau. The *124th Infantry* and other units extended from the Matanikau to Mount Austen. Remaining elements of the *38th Division* (including the *230th*, *228th*, and *229th Regiments*) plus detachments of the *124th Infantry* were deployed in the Mount Austen area.

At this time the total Japanese strength on the island stood at about 25,000 men. But they were incapable of concentrated offensive action, and they had dug in for a defensive stand while awaiting General Imamura's *Eighth Area Army* reinforcements. Rations were low, malaria now was more prevalent in Japanese ranks than in American, ammunition stocks were nearly exhausted, preventive and corrective medical capabilities were practically nonexistent, and the Tokyo Express was hard pressed to maintain even a starvation-level of supplies. Admiral Tanaka still was in charge of this supply operation down The Slot, and the measures now being taken were desperate ones. Destroyers tried to supply these Imperial troops by making high-speed runs to Guadalcanal and dropping off strings of lashed-together drums into which supplies had been sealed. Barges from the island then were to tow these drums ashore. This procedure was not too successful, however, and the troops managed to retrieve only about 30 per cent of these supplies that Tanaka's destroyers cast upon the water.

Tanaka's first run with the drums occurred on the night of 29 November, and his force was the one engaged by American ships in the Battle of Tassafaronga. With the same sort of aggressive naval action which had characterized the sending of his four destroyers into the fight against Admiral Lee's battleship force earlier in the month, Admiral Tanaka made a creditable show in this action. But this did not get the troops supplied, and that was still the big problem.

With new action shaping up, the Japanese attempts to supply their force by floating drums continued. The force dug

in to face the Americans could not even hold defensive positions unless they could be fed and cared for. Tanaka's destroyers raced down The Slot on 3 December and dropped strings of 1,500 drums. But the island troops managed to haul in only about 300 of these from the waters off Tassafaronga and Segilau. "Our troubles," Tanaka said, "were still with us."⁸

On 7 December Captain Sato led 10 destroyers to Guadalcanal for the third Japanese attempt to supply the troops. Fourteen U. S. bomber and fighter planes located this force in The Slot at about nightfall, however, and one Japanese ship was hit and had to start back north under tow by another destroyer. Two other ships escorted this aided cripple. Admiral Tanaka went south to the scene in his new flagship, the newly-built destroyer *Teruzuki*, an improved 2,500-ton model capable of 39 knots. The other destroyers which had been on the drum run went on south toward Guadalcanal but had to turn back when they encountered PT boats and U. S. planes. Thus the third supply run failed completely.

The fourth of these supply runs came on 11 December, and Tanaka himself led this one in his speedy *Teruzuki*. A flight of 21 U. S. bombers attacked these ships at about sunset but scored no hits. Tanaka's destroyers managed to shoot down two of six fighters which were covering for the bombers, and the Japanese steamed on south. The *Teruzuki* patrolled beyond Savo Island while the other destroyers dropped some 1,200 drums of supplies off Cape Esperance and then headed north again. Admiral Tanaka sighted some U. S. PT boats, and his new destroyer

went to the attack. The Japanese ship chased the PT boats away but in the process got hit in its port side aft by a torpedo. The ship caught fire and became unnavigable almost at once, and the destroyer *Naganami* hurried alongside to rescue survivors. Tanaka, who had been wounded and knocked unconscious, plus others from the officers and crew were transferred to this other destroyer, and the destroyer *Arashi* also came up to help. But the heartened U. S. PT boats chased these sound ships away from the sinking *Teruzuki*, and the Japanese could only drop life rafts to crew members who were still in the water. Some of the drums were recovered by the troops ashore, but with the loss of such ships as the *Teruzuki*, this sort of supply operation was becoming very costly. And now the moon was entering a phase which caused other such attempts to be temporarily postponed. Japanese defenses had received very little help for the actions which now shaped up against them.

The 132d Infantry of the Americal Division began the offensive against Mount Austen on 17 December, and by early January troops of this regiment had the major Japanese force in the area surrounded in a strong point called the Gifu. Although this pocket was not completely reduced until 23 January, the enemy was sufficiently restricted to preclude any threat to the perimeter or the rear of the general corps attack.

Meanwhile, in other preliminaries of the corps offensive, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines had taken Hills 54 and 55 west of the Matanikau, and the Americal Division Reconnaissance Squadron had seized Hill 56. These positions which were southeast of the southern anchor of the line extend-

⁸ *Tanaka Article*, II, 828.

ing inland from Point Cruz served to extend the American positions farther into Japanese territory west of Mount Austen. (See Map 27, Map Section)

THE CORPS OFFENSIVE

With the Japanese in the Mount Austen area localized in the Gifu, the drive to the west could get underway. General Patch planned to extend his Point Cruz-Hill 66 line farther inland and then to push west, destroying the Japanese or driving them from the island. General Collins' 25th Division (with 3/182, Marines of 1/2 and the Americal Reconnaissance Squadron attached) would advance west of Mount Austen on the extended flank inland, and at the same time assume responsibility for the Gifu Pocket which now would be behind the XIV Corps line. (See Map 27, Map Section).

The 2d Marine Division (less 1/2) would provide the corps' right element from the 25th Division's north flank to the beach. The Americal Division (minus the 182d Infantry, division artillery, and 2/132) would hold the main perimeter.

Since the 25th Division apparently would have some fighting to do before it could come abreast of the Point Cruz-Hill 66 line, its phase of the offensive was the first ordered into action. Colonel Robert B. McClure's 35th Infantry, with the Division Reconnaissance Troop and 3/182 attached, was ordered to relieve the 132d Infantry at the Gifu and then advance to the west on the division's inland flank. The 27th Infantry (Colonel William A. McCulloch) would capture the high ground south of Hill 66 between the northwest and southwest forks of the Matanikau. The 161st Infantry (Colonel

Clarence A. Orndorff) would be the division reserve.

The ground thus assigned to the 27th Infantry consisted of a jumble of hills (dubbed the Galloping Horse because of their appearance on aerial photographs) which lie some 1,500 yards south of Hill 66. Army units began their attacks against this terrain on 10 January, and, during the final actions here three days later, Marines on the right flank of the corps line began their forward movement.

Launching its attack with the 8th Marines on the right and the 2d on the left, the 2d Division immediately encountered a series of cross compartments in which the Japanese had established very effective defensive positions. Using a minimum of men and weapons, the enemy fired down the long axis of these valleys which were perpendicular to the Marine advance, and thus engaged the attackers in a cross fire in each terrain compartment.

Enemy positions of this type held up the 8th Marines throughout the day, but two battalions of the 2d Marines advanced about 1,000 yards on the inland flank. The 6th Marines then moved up to relieve the 2d Marines which was long overdue for withdrawal from the Guadalcanal area. Lines were adjusted at this time. The 8th Marines now was on the left and the 6th along the coast. This relief was completed by 15 January, and the 2d Marines sailed for New Zealand.

The 8th Marines hammered at the ravine defenses of the Japanese, and operations along the coast during this phase of the campaign as well as during actions later in January provided the first opportunity for Marines to test, in a rudimentary way, their principles of naval gunfire in support of a continuing attack

against an enemy.⁹ The four destroyers in action fired only deep support missions in this phase of the advance, however, and close-in fighting of the Japanese held the 8th Marines to insignificant gains until the afternoon of 15 January when flame throwers were put in action for the first time on this front. Three Japanese emplacements were burned out that day, and the attack, supported by tanks, began to move forward. By the end of 17 January the 8th Marines had advanced to positions abreast the 6th Marines.

The naval gunfire during this period indicated that both Marines and ships had much to learn. The Navy's peacetime training had not stressed this type of support, and likewise the Marine division had no naval gunfire organization or practice. There was no JASCO (Joint Assault Signal Company) such as appeared later, and no organic shore fire control parties or naval gunfire liaison teams in the infantry battalions and regiments.

But here along Guadalcanal's coast, Marines and ships took advantage of their new freedom from air and surface attacks to develop some gunfire procedures. Each direct support artillery battalion had two naval officers trained in naval gunfire principles, and these officers were sent out with FO (forward observer) teams to train them in shore fire control party (SFCP) duties. And while the naval officers ashore schooled Marine forward observers, artillery officers from the division went on board the support ships to inform

commanders and gunnery officers of the missions desired by the division.¹⁰

In addition to establishing some sound naval gunfire practices which would be most helpful in later Pacific assaults, the Marine action since 13 January had gained approximately 1,500 yards, killed over 600 Japanese, and captured two prisoners and a variety of enemy weapons and ammunition.

While the Marines fought along the coast, the 35th Infantry (reinforced) battled about 3,000 yards through the twisted ridges of an area southeast of the 25th Division's inland flank to take the Sea Horse complex (so called because it looked like one on an aerial photograph), and finally cleared Colonel Oka's defenders out of the Gifu Pocket.

The western line of XIV Corps now extended from Hill 53, the head of the Galloping Horse, north to a coastal flank some 1,500 yards west to Point Cruz. With elements of the 35th Infantry south of the Galloping Horse to guard against a flanking attack from that direction, the Americans at last were poised on a line of departure from which an attack could be launched to Kokumbona and beyond.

DRIVE TO THE WEST

Hoping to trap the Japanese at Kokumbona, General Patch in early January had sent a reinforced company (I) of the 147th Infantry around Cape Esperance in LCT's to Beaufort Bay on the island's southwest coast, and from there the force advanced up the overland trail toward Kokumbona to block the mountain passes against a possible Japanese escape to the

⁹ Although the 1st MarDiv landing was supported by naval gunfire, subsequent support fire from ships had been infrequent and on a catch-as-catch-can basis. Col F. P. Henderson, "Naval Gunfire in the Solomons—Part I: Guadalcanal," *MCGazette*, March 1956, 44–51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

south.¹¹ With this unit in place, the XIV Corps attack jumped off with the 25th Division on the left to envelop the enemy south flank, and the CAM Division (Composite Army-Marine) to advance west along the coast. The CAM Division consisted of the 6th Marines, the 182d and 147th Infantry regiments, and artillery of the Americal and 2d Marine Division.¹² (See Map 28, Map Section)

The 25th Division began its flanking movement on 20 January, swinging in toward Kokumbona and taking Hills 90 and 98 by 21 January. This high ground, immediately south of Kokumbona, was in front of the CAM Division and dominated the coastal area around the Japanese base. The enemy troops facing the CAM Division thus were outflanked and partially surrounded by the two forces. The attack continued on 23 January when the 27th Infantry occupied Kokumbona, but by this time most of the enemy already had slipped away along the coast.

Meanwhile, the CAM Division on 22 January had opened a full-scale attack with the 6th Marines on the right by the beach, the 147th Infantry in the center, and the 182d Infantry on the left. Again the Marines had called on naval gunfire, and this time four destroyers provided close support to CAM troops who faced more cross compartments forward of Kokumbona.

¹¹ The Japanese did not attempt to escape by this route.

¹² The "Composite Division" was merely a convenient term for the force formed by Marine and Army units during the January drive to the west. The 2d Marine Division staff served as the CAM Division staff. The name first appears in a field order from the XIV Corps on 25 January, but the "division" itself had no administrative identity.

A radio spotting frequency was assigned the four SFCs serving with the assault battalions of the 6th Marines and the 182d Infantry, and on this frequency the shore spotters called in fire missions from the destroyers. Another frequency was established between the Division Naval Gunfire Officer (NGFO) and all four of the destroyers, and forward spotters also could use this net if the need arose.

In this phase of the corps advance, Marines in the CAM Division ran into the strongest opposition, and they were stopped the first day by about 200 Japanese in a ravine west of Hill 94. With the help of the close-in naval gunfire adding its weight to artillery, air, and infantry weapons, this opposition was overcome by noon of 24 January when the CAM Division made contact with the 25th Division on the high ground above Kokumbona. Although some of the fighting had been most difficult, the Japanese were pulling back slowly. It appeared that they would probably establish strong defenses farther west.

Actually there would be more stiff fighting on the island, but no all-out stand of Japanese on a strong line of defense, and no more Japanese reinforcements to face. Tokyo and Rabaul had called new signals, and General Hyakutake was withdrawing his troops. The situation now was reversing itself. The U. S. operation, starting as a shoestring, had slowly added other cords in a warp and woof of fabric with a definite pattern. But the Japanese conquest string had ended in the Solomons and New Guinea, and never had a firm knot tied in the end of it.

Affairs in New Guinea suffered when Hyakutake's reserves were diverted from a planned reinforcement there to the No-

vember attempt to retake Guadalcanal. Now a small force of Japanese had met with disaster trying to recapture Port Moresby from across the Owen Stanley Mountains, and the 50,000 troops General Imamura brought down from Java to reinforce Hyakutake would have to be used in New Guinea. Around 15 December the Japanese decided to evacuate Guadalcanal and build up new defenses farther north in the Solomon chain. The starving troops on the island would fight delaying actions toward Cape Esperance, and they would be evacuated in detachments from that point by fast destroyers. Commanding these destroyers would be Rear Admiral Tomiji Koyanagi, former chief of staff of the *Second Fleet*. He had replaced the wounded and exhausted Admiral Tanaka, who now was on his way to the home islands where he would serve on the *Naval General Staff*.

XIV Corps maintained the momentum of its western advance by resupplying its attacking divisions over the beach at Kokumbona, where the Tokyo Express had often unloaded, and ordering the attack to push on toward the Poha River, a stream some 2,500 yards beyond Hyakutake's former headquarters village. The 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry met opposition in the high ground south and west of Kokumbona, but this was overcome in attacks of 24 and 25 January, and units of the regiment reached the Poha before dark on the 25th. (See Map 28, Map Section)

FINAL PURSUIT

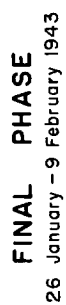
After the corps advance reached the Poha River, intelligence sources began reporting a new buildup of Japanese ships at Rabaul and in the Shortlands, and the

Allied command concluded that the enemy was ready for still another attempt to retake Guadalcanal. Admiral Halsey deployed six task forces south of Guadalcanal, and General Patch recalled the 25th Division from the western advance to bolster the perimeter. It was the same problem General Vandegrift had faced so many times in the past, but now there were more troops and the western attack did not have to be completely stopped. Pursuit of the Japanese was assigned to the CAM Division.

This estimate of Japanese intentions slowed pursuit of the enemy and probably aided their escape, but the mistake was an honest one. Actually the Japanese strength at Rabaul had been mounting, and the basic intelligence was good. But this time the activity in the Bismarcks and the Shortlands was the result of Japanese plans to complete the evacuation of Guadalcanal and to start new defensive installations closer to Rabaul.

By this time the Japanese had nearly completed their withdrawal to evacuation areas around Cape Esperance, and when regiments of the CAM Division launched their new attacks early on 26 January they advanced rapidly along the narrow coastal corridor against slight opposition. Naval gunfire again was employed, but once more it fired in deep support at targets of opportunity and to interdict the coastal trail forward of the advancing troops. (See Map 29)

The Marines and soldiers gained 1,000 yards the first day and 2,000 yards the second. Opposition now was such that General Patch on 29 January brought the 182d Infantry back to the perimeter and ordered the 147th Infantry to continue the pursuit while the 6th Marines covered the rear of the Army regiment. The advance



resumed on 30 January, and the soldiers ran into resistance near the mouth of the Bonegi River about 2,000 yards northwest of the Poha. There the units fought until 2 February when the Japanese withdrew. The U. S. force advanced again next day, and on 5 February the 147th held up 1,000 yards short of the Umasami River, a stream some 2,500 yards northwest of Tasafaronga Point.

Meanwhile, to form a new trap for the retreating Japanese, General Patch on 31 January dispatched the reinforced 2d Battalion, 132d Infantry around Cape Esperance to land near the western tip of the island. From that point the battalion was to advance to Cape Esperance and cut off the Japanese line of retreat. After landing early on 1 February at Verahue, the force advanced to the village of Titi, nearly a third of the way to the cape. By 7 February this force was ready to push on from that village, and the north coast attack was prepared to advance beyond the Umasami River.

By this time the 147th Infantry had been relieved at the Umasami by the 161st Infantry of the 25th Division, and on 8 February this regiment reached Doma Cove some eight miles from Esperance. On the same date 2/132 arrived at Kamimbo Bay a short distance from the tip of the island, and on 9 February the two units met at the village of Tenaru on the coast below the high ground of the cape. Only token resistance had been met in these final days. Evacuation of the Japanese from the island had been completed on the night of 7-8 February.

The Guadalcanal campaign was over. When the two units met at Tenaru village, General Patch sent to Admiral Halsey a message announcing "Total and complete

defeat of Japanese forces on Guadalcanal. . . ." ¹¹ From a hazardous early step up the long island path toward Tokyo, the Allies had gained a solid footing which would become an all-important base until after the mounting of the final offensive against Okinawa two years later.

Happy to hear the news that Guadalcanal was at last secured—but hardly disappointed that they had not been there for the final chase—were the veterans of the 1st Marine Division in Australia, the 2d and 8th Marines in New Zealand, and the 1st Raider and 1st Parachute Battalions in New Caledonia. These old island hands were resting, fighting off recurring attacks of malaria, getting the jungle out of their blood, and already training for their next campaign.

EPILOGUE

Guadalcanal was the primer of ocean and jungle war. It was everything the United States could do at that moment against everything the Japanese could manage at that place. From this the Americans learned that they could beat the enemy, and they never stopped doing it. The headlines from Guadalcanal did more for home front morale than did the fast carrier raids of 1942's winter and early spring, for at last Americans had come to grips with the enemy; and the outcome of this fighting added in the bargain a boost to the spirit of the Pacific fighting man. The benefits from official

¹¹To which Halsey replied in part: "When I sent a Patch to act as tailor for Guadalcanal, I did not expect him to remove the enemy's pants and sew it on so quickly . . . Thanks and congratulations." FAdm Halsey and LCdr J. Bryan, III, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1947), 148.

and unofficial circulation of lessons learned there by the Army, Navy, and Marines were many and far-reaching.

Veterans of all ranks from all branches of the service came home to teach and spread the word while many more stayed on to temper the replacements coming out to the war. Barracks bull sessions and bivouac yarns added color and not a little weight to the formal periods of instruction. Thus was the myth that the Japanese were supermen shattered, and the bits of combat lore or the legendary tall tales and true which begin, "Now, on the 'Canal . . ." still have not entirely disappeared from the Marine repertoire.

General Vandegrift summed it up in a special introduction to *The Guadalcanal Campaign*, the historical monograph which contains the Marine Corps' first study of the operation:

We struck at Guadalcanal to halt the advance of the Japanese. We did not know how strong he was, nor did we know his plans. We knew only that he was moving down the island chain and that he had to be stopped.

We were as well trained and as well armed as time and our peacetime experience allowed us to be. We needed combat to tell us how effective our training, our doctrines, and our weapons had been.

We tested them against the enemy, and we found that they worked. From that moment in 1942, the tide turned, and the Japanese never again advanced.

Likewise, Guadalcanal was more than just another battle for the Japanese, but the lesson they learned there was a bitter one. The occupation which they started almost on a whim had ended in disaster, and from this they never quite recovered. Captain Ohmae summed it up:

. . . when the war started, it was not planned to take the Solomons. However, the early actions were so easy that it was decided to

increase the perimeter defense line and to gain a position which would control American traffic to Australia. Expansion into the Solomons from Rabaul was then carried out. Unfortunately, we also carried out the expansion at the same time instead of consolidating our holdings in that area. After you captured Guadalcanal, we still thought that we would be able to retake it and use it as an outpost for the defense of the empire. This effort was very costly, both at the time and in later operations, because we were never able to recover from the ship and pilot losses received in that area.¹²

Unfortunately for the Japanese there were very few lessons from Guadalcanal that they could put to effective use. In a sense this was phase one of their final examination, the beginning of a series of tests for the military force which had conquered the Oriental side of the Pacific, and they failed it. After this there was neither time nor means for another semester of study and preparation. Admiral Tanaka had this to say about the operation and its significance:

Operations to reinforce Guadalcanal extended over a period of more than five months. They amounted to a losing war of attrition in which Japan suffered heavily in and around that island . . . There is no question that Japan's doom was sealed with the closing of the struggle for Guadalcanal. Just as it betokened the military character and strength of her opponent, so it presaged Japan's weakness and lack of planning that would spell her defeat.¹³

The Allies entered this first lesson with sound textbooks. In the field of amphibious warfare, Marine doctrine hammered out in the peacetime laboratory now could be polished and improved in practice and supported by a rapidly mobilizing industrial front at home. Modern equipment which everybody knew was needed began to flow out to the test of combat. There

¹² *Ohmae Interrogation*, 474.

¹³ *Tanaka Article*, II, 831.

it took on refinements and practical modifications, as doctrines and techniques improved. New models continued to arrive and were quickly put to use in the hands of now-skilled fighting men.

For example, landing craft which went into mass production aided the tactical aspects of amphibious assaults and also lessened the logistical problems at the beachhead. Improved communications equipment made it possible for the Marine Corps to improve and make more effective many of the special organizations and operational techniques which previously had been little more than carefully-sketched theory. Air and naval gunfire liaison parties experimented with on Guadalcanal later became the efficient tools of integrated warfare that Marines had been confident they could become. Improved equipment brought improved technique, and thus began a continuous cycle of increasing efficiency which made the final amphibious assaults by cooperating U. S. forces at Iwo Jima and Okinawa remarkable models of military precision.

This strength of new equipment and ability enabled the Allies to take command of the strategy in a contest in which the enemy had been able to set his men for a checkmate before the contest began. The psychology of total war found expression for the front-line Marine in his observation that "the only good Jap is a dead one." But an even better one was the one bypassed and left to ineffective existence on an island in the rear areas: he cost the Allies less. Strength gave the Allies this capability to bypass many garrisons.

Likewise Guadalcanal proved that it often was cheaper and easier to build a new airfield than to capture and then im-

prove one the Japanese had built or were building. This coincided well with the basic amphibious doctrine long agreed upon: never hit a defended beach if the objective can be reached over an undefended one. Together these principles sometimes made it possible for the Allies to land on an enemy island and build an airfield some distance from the hostile garrison. This the Marines did in November 1943, at Bougainville. A perimeter was established around the airfield, and there defenders sat waiting for the Japanese to do the hard work of marching over difficult terrain to present themselves for a battle if they so desired. It was a premeditated repeat of the Guadalcanal tactic, and when the Japanese obliged by so accepting it, they were defeated.

All services, units and men in the Pacific, or slated to go there, were eager to learn the valuable lessons of early combat and to put them into practice. For the Marine Corps, an important factor in the continuing success of the advance across the Pacific was the delineation of command responsibilities between the naval task force commander and the amphibious troop commander.

Late in this first offensive General Vandegrift was able to initiate an important change in naval thinking concerning the command of amphibious operations. The general and Admiral Turner had often disagreed on the conduct of activities ashore on Guadalcanal, and Vandegrift had maintained that the commander trained for ground operations should not be a subordinate of the local naval amphibious force commander. His theory prevailed, and in the future the amphibious troops commander, once established ashore, would be on the same command

level as the naval task force commander. Both of them would be responsible to a common superior.

With this point cleared, and with the valuable lessons of Guadalcanal combat a part of his personal experience and knowledge, Vandegrift as a lieutenant general became commander of the I Marine Amphibious Corps in the fall of 1943 and was able to guide an ever-expanding fighting force already involved in new actions in the Solomons. Later, on 10 November 1943, he left the Pacific to become the eighteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The cost of Guadalcanal was not as great as some later operations. Total Army and Marine casualties within the ground forces amounted to 1,598 men and officers killed and 4,709 wounded. Marines of the ground forces killed or dead from wounds numbered 1,152; and 2,799 were wounded and 55 listed as missing. In addition 55 individuals from Marine aviation units were killed or died of wounds while 127 were wounded and 85 missing.¹³ Defeat for the Japanese was

¹³ A tabulation of Marine casualties appears in Appendix D.

more costly. Although some 13,000 enemy soldiers were evacuated from Guadalcanal for new defensive positions farther north, more personnel than this had lost their lives on the island. Japanese sources list approximately 14,800 killed or missing in action while 9,000 died of wounds and disease. Some 1,000 enemy troops were taken prisoner. More than 600 enemy planes and pilots also were lost.

Combat shipping losses were about even for the two opponents. The Allies and the Japanese each lost 24 fighting ships, with the loss amounting to 126,240 tons for the Allies and 134,839 tons for the Japanese.

There would be bigger battles later. There would be tiny atolls for which the Japanese would demand higher prices on shorter terms. And far away to the north a dead volcano waited to be the backdrop of a photograph which would become the symbol of the entire island war ahead. But nothing could take from Guadalcanal its unique spot in history. The first step, however short and faltering, is always the most important.

Bibliographical Notes

This history is based principally on official Marine Corps records: the reports, diaries, orders, etc., of the units or activities involved in the specific operations described. Records of the other armed services have been consulted where pertinent. On matters pertaining to operations at high strategic level, the authors have drawn on the records of the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

Because this volume spans a considerable period of time and deals with a wide variety of activities, the same records seldom overlap from one part of the book to another. These are fully cited in the text and will be discussed separately as applicable to specific parts. Except as otherwise noted such records are on file at, or obtainable through, the Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps.

There are, however, a number of published works of general interest more widely cited throughout this volume. The more important of these are listed below.

Books

Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U. S. Marines and Amphibious War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951. This deals with the evolution of amphibious doctrines, tactics, and materiel and their application in the Pacific. This excellent study was undertaken by the history faculty of Princeton University at the behest of the Marine Corps. In no sense an official history, the conclusions it contains were arrived at independently by the authors and researchers who compiled it.

Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Volumes III, IV, V. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948, 1949, 1950. The volumes cited bear the individual titles: *The Rising Sun in the Pacific*; *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions*; and *The Struggle for Guadalcanal*. Although he disclaims his work as official, Rear

Admiral Morison (USNR, Retired) undertook the monumental project on naval order and has carried it through with all possible support of the Navy. The author ranks as one of our leading writers and historians, and the whole series is highly readable and reliable. A few minor errors of fact that crept into the first editions are being corrected in subsequent printings.

Robert Sherrod, *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*. Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1952. This is another unofficial history undertaken at the request, and with the support, of the Marine Corps. The title is self-explanatory, but the author gives some account of the earlier days of Marine Corps Aviation. It is by far the most comprehensive treatment of this subject now in existence.

E. B. Potter (Editor), *The United States and World Sea Power*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955. This large (963 pages) single-volume history is the work of twelve faculty members of the Department of English, History and Government, U. S. Naval Academy. It is extremely comprehensive in scope, covering naval history from ancient operations to today. As a result comparatively few of its chapters are applicable to Marine Corps operations in World War II. It furnished the authors of this book, however, much valuable background.

Ernest J. King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1952. This somewhat heavy-handed tome sheds many interesting sidelights on high-level decisions and how they were arrived at.

William F. Halsey and J. Bryan, III, *Admiral Halsey's Story*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1947. This popular treatment of one of the most spectacular figures in the Pacific war presents eyewitness descriptions of many striking and important events.

Masuo Kato, *The Lost War*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1946. Kato, a Japanese news corre-

spondent in Washington at the time of Pearl Harbor, was interned and then repatriated in the civilian exchange ship. He understands thoroughly both Japanese and U. S. points of view. His "inside story" presents vividly political, military, and civilian conditions in Japan as the war developed and sheds much light on why they developed as they did on the enemy's side.

United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946. This is a report of USSBS (Pacific) Naval Analysis Division. It attempts to present the broad picture of the war through brief descriptions of the various campaigns, but unfortunately was prepared too soon after the event to gain deep perspective. The text contains many factual inaccuracies. This book is of great value, however, in presenting translations of many enemy documents that reveal Japanese wartime thinking.

United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*, 2 vols. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946. This is a companion report to *Campaigns* (above) and similarly is of value in telling the Japanese side of the story.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE MARINE CORPS

Official Documents

Annual Reports of the Commandant of the Marine Corps constitute the basic primary source relied upon in tracing the growth and development of the Marine Corps throughout the period under consideration. These are supplemented by pertinent reports at lower levels, as indicated in the text. More detailed breakdown of personnel statistics derives from study of contemporary muster rolls.

In dealing with the evolution of amphibious doctrine Marine Corps and Navy manuals pertaining to landing operations, issued during the period under discussion, are the principal sources. Files of Headquarters Marine Corps have been consulted in tracing the origin and development of the Fleet Marine Force. These files, together with those of the Navy Depart-

ment Bureau of Ships and Senate Report No. 10, Part 16, 78th Congress, 2d Session, *Additional Report of the Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program*, form the basis for the discussion of the development of landing craft and amphibious vehicles.

The reports of the units assigned to the Iceland occupation force, supplemented by command correspondence files, provided the thread of the narrative. Especially valuable are the official letters written by General Marston to various officers at Headquarters Marine Corps giving his personal and professional commentary on the operation.

Unofficial Sources

Letters of comment on draft manuscripts, interviews, and in the case of the Iceland operation, the extensive notes, correspondence, and draft narratives of Lieutenant Colonel John L. Zimmerman, have supplemented official material. Especially useful in providing background information on the amphibious tractor was an interview with Lieutenant Colonel Ernest E. Linsert, a participant in most of the initial stages of its development.

It was permissible to keep a diary in an overseas theatre for the first few months of the war; there was no prohibition, naturally, against the keeping of diaries in peacetime. General Oliver P. Smith, who served as battalion commander of 1/6 throughout the Iceland occupation, kept such a diary and made a copy of it available to the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps. The diary is doubly valuable because General Smith has included extensive comments elaborating on the necessarily brief daily entries. The resulting 132-page typescript goes far toward giving the reader the on-the-spot "feel" of the operation.

Books and Periodicals

William H. Russell, "Genesis of FMF Doctrine: 1879-1898," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April-July 1951. In this four-part article, Professor Russell of the Naval Academy discusses the earliest recorded debates within the naval establishment on the amphibious problems which developed following the Navy's transition from sail to steam.

General Holland M. Smith, "Development of Amphibious Tactics in the U. S. Navy," *Marine*

Corps Gazette, June–October 1948. General Smith probably contributed more than any single individual to the developments which he discusses in this authoritative five-part article.

John H. Russell, Jr., "Birth of the Fleet Marine Force," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1946. As Assistant Commandant, General Russell conceived the FMF essentially as it exists today; as Commandant, he guided it through its early formative years.

Holland M. Smith and Percy Finch, *Coral and Brass*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949. In this autobiographical volume, General Smith touches again on the early struggles dealt with in his *Gazette* series and carries the story through the Pacific war.

Major General John A. Lejeune, "The United States Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1923. In this article, General Lejeune, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, expresses the prevailing Marine Corps thought on advance base operations.

Brigadier General Dion Williams, "Blue Marine Corps Expeditionary Force," *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 1925. In this article, General Williams discusses the Army-Navy amphibious maneuver held in Hawaiian waters in 1925.

Lieutenant Colonel Victor J. Croizat, "The Marines' Amphibian," *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 1953. Lieutenant Colonel Croizat, in this article, relates the story of the amphibian tractor.

Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, "The Framework of Hemisphere Defense," MS of a forthcoming volume in the series, *United States Army in World War II*, has been most useful in presenting the Army's viewpoint of the problems presented by the Iceland operation. Dr. Fairchild also made available the final draft manuscripts of several chapters he wrote for a further OCMH volume on Army operations in the Eastern Atlantic (as yet untitled) which detail the progress of the occupation and examine Iceland's peculiar command situation.

PART II

WAR COMES

Official Documents

Reports of the units involved, as cited in the text, form the basis of the narrative of Marine

garrison activities in Samoa and the 14th Naval District. All Marine records on Guam were either destroyed or captured and the reconstruction of the action on 8–10 December is largely taken from the post-captivity report of the island's governor.

The primary source of information on the actions of the United States and Japan in the period immediately before, during, and just after the Japanese raid on Pearl is Senate Document No. 244, 79th Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*. In addition to the basic report of the findings of the committee, there are 39 volumes of hearings, testimony, and exhibits which touch on every facet of the story. The record of the hearings and the appended documents constitute a unique 10,000,000-word examination of a military disaster.

Unofficial Documents

Unofficial reports, personal letters, notes and interviews of numerous individuals, and on occasion unpublished manuscripts, have been drawn upon to supplement official material where pertinent. An especially valuable source of information has been the comments of key participants in the actions described who reviewed draft manuscripts of this history as well as drafts of previous campaign monographs. Unofficial comment of this type, as cited in the text, has been especially helpful in developing a fuller story of the initial action at Midway.

Books and Periodicals

In dealing with the broader aspects of the war and decisions and events on a high strategic plane, two volumes of the Army's official history *United States Army in World War II* have been most useful. They present a lucid account of thought and planning at Chief of Staff level with very detailed citation of sources consulted:

Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*. Washington: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1950.

Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941–1942*. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953.

Major O. R. Lodge, *The Recapture of Guam*. Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division,

Headquarters Marine Corps, 1954. While this monograph is primarily concerned with the operations on Guam in the summer of 1944, it does include a narrative of the Japanese capture of the island which is the basis for this volume's story.

Thomas Wilds, "The Japanese Seizure of Guam," *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 1955. This article by an accomplished Japanese translator is the only published narrative taken from enemy sources of the capture of the island and is essential to a clear picture of the operation.

PART III

DEFENSE OF WAKE

Official Documents

Official records pertaining to the defense of Wake ceased to exist with the atoll's capture by the Japanese, save for the dispatches which got through to Pearl Harbor and the reports carried out by Major Bayler several days prior to the final struggle, as related in the narrative.

Upon his return after release from Japanese prison camp, Colonel Devereux requested each of his surviving officers to submit to him an informal report concerning his part in the operation. From study of the material thus obtained and the promptings of his own memory, Devereux then prepared his official report for submission to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Colonel Paul A. Putnam submitted a similar report as CO of VMF-211. These comprise the basic sources from which the version of the operation contained herein derives.

Unofficial Documents

Eighteen officers submitted informal reports to Colonel Devereux, and six of these later filled out a special questionnaire prepared by the Historical Branch. These papers, together with copies of pertinent correspondence and notes and transcriptions of interviews with individuals, are on file in Marine Corps Archives.

Books and Periodicals

The defense of Wake figures more or less incidentally in all of the works of general interest previously described. But comparatively

little has been published about the details of the operation itself. Since it was so narrowly a Marine action, the other services have shown little interest in studying it, and within the Corps few remain who know much about it. The following works, however, are deemed worthy of mention:

Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., *The Defense of Wake*. Washington: Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1947. This is the official Marine Corps historical monograph from which the version in this book has been adapted.

James P. S. Devereux, *The Story of Wake Island*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947. This work prepared by the commander of the Wake defense with some professional literary assistance does not pretend to be a history, but it does contain a number of human interest sidelights not found elsewhere.

Lieutenant Colonel Walter L. J. Bayler, *Last Man off Wake Island*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943. This book was rushed to publication to shed timely light on an event currently before the public eye. Memories of the events during his stay on Wake were still fresh in Colonel Bayler's mind at the time of writing; but, of course, he did not see the final battle.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "We're Headed for Wake," *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 1946. Lieutenant Colonel Heinl, then a first lieutenant, was a member of the abortive relief expedition and here gives a full account of that little understood event from the point of view of those engaged in it.

PART IV

MARINES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Official Documents

Just before the fall of Corregidor an American submarine took off a load of escapees and a scant haul of the records of units that had fought the Japanese on Luzon. Fortunately, these records included the daily journals of the 4th Marines operations and intelligence sections plus a very few other papers and reports, mostly interleaved in the journal copy books. For some reason, not now known, this contemporary material has been ignored until the writing of this volume. In the

few previous accounts which mention Marine action in the Philippines, there are a number of direct contradictions to the entries in these journals. None of these errors are particularly serious, however, and where it was possible they have been corrected in this version of the action.

A number of the official reports cited, including that of the 4th Marines, were drawn up long after the events they describe by participants who survived captivity. The details of these reports are somewhat suspect since the accounts are distillations of memory, carefully hidden notes, and those few official papers of the period that were available when the reports were prepared. It is not difficult to find minor errors in these reports, but on the whole they are quite valuable.

The cited narratives compiled by Admirals Hart and Rockwell, together with their supplementary postwar comments on naval activities in Asiatic waters, have been very helpful in establishing the background of the Navy and Marine Corps contribution to the defense of the Philippines.

Unofficial Documents

A number of undated informal reports submitted by survivors of the 4th Marines, presumably written right after the war, form the largest body of information about the Marine part in the Philippines operation. These reports are frequently cited in the text. Of almost equal importance are the letters of comment received from over 25 survivors who read the preliminary draft of this part. These men were able to clear up many puzzling matters of command relationship and small unit action that were left unanswered in official documents and the personal accounts mentioned above. The narrative of the fighting in the East Sector on Corregidor is drawn in large part from these letters and unofficial reports.

A Marine reserve officer, Captain Grant J. Berry, has compiled an interesting story of the 4th Marines in the Philippines, much of it based upon correspondence with survivors. He used this material to write his master's thesis at the University of California in 1951. A copy of the thesis and a portion of his correspondence with former members of the 4th Marines is on file in the Marine Corps Archives.

Japanese Sources

Following the close of the war, the U. S. Army's Historical Section, G-2, General Headquarters, Far East Command, sponsored and directed the preparation of a series of monographs entitled *Japanese Studies in World War II*. These were prepared by Japanese commanders and staff officers who had participated in the various Pacific campaigns; and they were compiled from reports, notes, and consultation with key survivors. These translated studies have been checked carefully against all other available sources and found to be remarkably accurate. In the case of the early Philippines campaign several of these monographs have been consulted and the two-volume study of Fourteenth Army operations has been used frequently to give the enemy viewpoint. This particular monograph is very uneven in quality but it includes a wealth of information available nowhere else.

Books and Periodicals

Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953. Dr. Morton's book, is another of the volumes of the *United States Army in World War II* series. It presents what is easily the most comprehensive and thorough treatment of this subject yet to appear in print.

Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate (Editors), *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942—The Army Air Forces in World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948. This is the first of a series of official histories, subsequent volumes of which will be cited throughout this history when Army air operations have a bearing on the narrative of Marine action.

General Jonathan C. Wainwright, *General Wainwright's Story*, Robert Considine (Editor). Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946. Although much of this book is devoted to General Wainwright's experiences as a Japanese prisoner, the early portions shed some interesting first-hand sidelights on the fighting on Bataan and Corregidor.

Kazumaro Uno, *Corregidor: Isle of Delusion*. Shanghai: Press Bureau of the Imperial Japanese Army Headquarters in China, 1942. This

propaganda booklet, printed in English, contains a number of second-hand accounts of enemy experiences in the seizure of Corregidor. The book has been used principally to give personality to the enemy side of the action. A photostatic copy of this book is held by the Office of the Chief of Military History.

Hanson W. Baldwin, "The 4th Marines at Corregidor," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1946-February 1947. One of today's leading analysts and writers on military subjects carefully combed the 4th Marines' report, the personal narratives of survivors mentioned above, and consulted numerous individual participants in compiling his detailed four-part article on the stand of the regiment on Corregidor. The primary fault of the study is that it failed to utilize the existing 4th Marine journals and therefore has perpetuated a number of minor errors regarding the combat organization and strength of the regiment.

First Lieutenant William F. Hogaboom, "Action Report—Bataan," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1946. Lieutenant Hogaboom died while he was a prisoner of war but his narrative, secretly compiled during captivity, survived him and was published under this title. Hogaboom participated in both of the major Marine actions in the Philippines, Longoskawayan Point and Corregidor's defense.

Lieutenant Colonel William F. Prickett, "Naval Battalion at Mariveles," *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 1950. This article by a survivor of 3/4 who talked to many participants in the Longoskawayan action disagrees in some few respects with the official version of this action given in Commander Bridget's report. Prickett's story is in much more detail, however, than any official history, and well worth reading.

PART V

DECISION AT MIDWAY

Official Documents

This account of Marine activities on Midway is based mainly on the reports and diaries of the units participating: the 6th Defense Battalion and MAG-22. Also consulted were reports, plans, and official correspondence at higher levels: CinCPac, Commandant Fourteenth Naval District, etc., some of which are cited in the text.

Unofficial Documents

In course of preparation of the historical monograph on which this account is mainly based, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heintz, Jr., carried on extensive correspondence with individuals who held key positions on Midway before and during the attack. Many of these he interviewed personally. Some of this documentation is cited in the text; much more, of incidental interest, is on file in Marine Corps Archives.

Books and Periodicals

As with preceding descriptions of naval operations, the previously cited sources have been relied on. In addition, the following works have been extensively consulted and used for this part:

Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heintz, Jr., *Marines at Midway*. Washington: Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1948. This is the historical monograph which, much-edited and re-worked, forms the foundation for the present account.

M. Fuchida and M. Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle that Doomed Japan*. Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1955. This is an excellent account of the battle from the Japanese side of the action.

Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, IJN, "Action Report by C-in-C of the First Air Fleet," *ONI Review*, May 1947. This article is simply a translation of what must stand as one of the most revealing documents obtained from the Japanese following the war. It is Admiral Nagumo's official report of the debacle in which he played the leading part. It is frank and factual to a surprising degree, and detailed to the extent of including charts showing the exact location of each bomb hit on each of the four carriers destroyed. It also includes a chronological log of all messages sent and received during the entire period of the approach, action, and withdrawal.

PART VI

GUADALCANAL

Official Documents

In coverage of the strategic planning for Guadalcanal this text cites much official corre-

spondence and planning at top level. The correspondence between Admiral King and General Marshall was obtained from the Naval History Division; material pertaining to the Joint Chiefs of Staff was furnished by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.

As in all operations discussed in this history, those in Part VI are based on the reports of the units concerned. These include action reports, war diaries, etc., of tactical units, and the journals of the various staff sections. At this stage of the war, however, Marines were less experienced in preparing reports than they became later. Command and staff personnel believed fighting to be more important than writing. Thus the documentation on many phases of early operations is fragmentary and incomplete. The 1st Marine Division's "Final Report on the Guadalcanal Operation" was not compiled until several months after the campaign, although much of the material it contains was prepared on the scene.

The Army and Navy were little better than the Marine Corps in this respect; their official documentation also leaves much to be desired. Generally speaking, the records of reporting units are in the custody of the service to which they belong.

Unofficial Documents

In the course of preparing the Marine Corps preliminary monograph on Guadalcanal, Major John L. Zimmerman circulated copies of his preliminary draft among many individuals who participated in that operation. These elicited many factual corrections and cogent comments which are included in the text. He also interviewed some of these officers. Notes or transcriptions of these interviews, together with all pertinent correspondence, are available through Marine Corps Archives.

Books and Periodicals

As the first protracted ground operation of the war, Guadalcanal elicited a spate of published material. Much of this was journalistic in nature; but in addition to these works of general interest, the following apply more narrowly to the historical examination of the campaign:

Major John L. Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign*. Washington: Historical Division,

Headquarters Marine Corps, 1949. This is the Marine Corps' preliminary study which serves as the groundwork for the present, completely revised and much more complete, account of the battle.

John Miller, Jr., *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*. Washington: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1949. This excellent volume is one in the series *United States Army in World War II*, and it has been relied on for much of the interpretation of material pertaining to Army command and operations of Army units.

Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate (Editors), *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950. Volume IV of the series *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, this deals in greater detail with aviation operations than is practical in a general history of the campaign.

Herbert L. Merrillat, *The Island*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944. The author participated in operations on Guadalcanal and writes at first hand, and with much human interest, of what he and his fellow Marines experienced there.

Eric A. Feldt, *The Coastwatchers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Commander Feldt, RAN, organized and commanded that hardy band of rugged individualists who lurked in the jungle behind the Japanese lines and radioed out invaluable information to the Allied forces. Here he tells for the first time the story which was top secret during the war.

Many articles in periodicals were likewise journalistic in nature. They provide valuable sources for information which helps fill the gaps of the official accounts, however, and they have been cited where used in the text. One article bears special mention:

Vice Admiral R. Tanaka with R. Pineau, "Japan's Losing Struggle for Guadalcanal," two parts, *USNI Proceedings*, July and August 1956. This excellent article sheds much light on the Japanese side of the Guadalcanal operation, particularly on the dramatic comings and goings of the Tokyo Express, those determined destroyers and cruisers which guarded the convoys shuttling supplies and reinforcements from Rabaul and the Shortlands to Guadalcanal. With the kind permission of the *Proceedings*, this volume quotes many passages from this article.

Chronology

The following listing of events is limited to those coming within the scope of this book, and those forecasting events to be treated in the volumes to follow.

- 10 November 1775... Continental Congress authorizes raising of two battalions of Marines.
- 11 July 1798... Congress reactivates Marine Corps.
- 10 June 1898... Battalion of Marines seizes Guantanamo Bay; preliminary thinking on Advanced Base concept begins.
- 10 December 1898... Spain cedes Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to U. S.
- 13 July 1910... Marine School for Advanced Base Training established.
- 25 April 1915... First modern amphibious assault: British land on Gallipoli.
- 27 April 1917... First Marine aviation unit formed: "Marine Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force."
- 28 June 1919... Treaty of Versailles gives Japan mandates for German islands in Central Pacific.
- 23 July 1921... "Operations Plan 712" accepted by Major General Commandant, establishing Marine Corps concept of strategy in the Pacific.
- 7 December 1933... Fleet Marine Force established.
- 15 January 1934... *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations* published.
- 1 September 1939... Germans invade Poland; World War II begins.

1940

- 7 May... Pacific Fleet ordered by President to remain indefinitely in Hawaiian waters.
- 5 July... Export Control Act invoked against Japan to prohibit exportation of strategic materials and equipment.
- 19 July... President signs Naval Expansion Act containing provisions for "Two Ocean Navy."
- 29 September... Midway Detachment, FMF arrives at Midway.
- 8 October... U. S. advises its citizens to leave Far East.

1941

- 12 May... Ambassador Nomura of Japan presents Secretary of State Cordell Hull with Japanese proposal for a "just peace in the Pacific."
- 27 May... President declares a state of unlimited emergency; he announces that the Atlantic Neutrality Patrol is extended and that Pacific Fleet units have been transferred to the Atlantic.
- 12 June... All Naval Reserve personnel not in deferred status are called to active duty.
- 22 June... Germany, Italy, and Romania declare war on Russia and invade along a front from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

7 July	1st Marine Brigade lands in Iceland. 1st Marine Aircraft Wing forms at Quantico, Va.	10 December	Guam surrenders to Japanese landing force.
10 July	2d Marine Aircraft Wing forms at San Diego, Calif.	11 December	U. S. declares war on Germany and Italy. Wake Island defenders repulse Japanese landing attempt. Japanese make additional landings in Philippines.
15 August	Naval Air Station, Palmyra Island, and Naval Air Facility, Johnston Island, established.	20 December	Adm E. J. King becomes Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.
11 September	President orders Navy to attack any vessel threatening U. S. shipping.	21 December	Naval defense forces in Philippine Islands move headquarters to Corregidor.
14 November	Marines are ordered to leave Shanghai, Peiping, and Tientsin, China.	22 December	Japanese land at Lingayen Gulf, P. I.
20 November	Ambassador Nomura presents Japan's "final proposal" to keep peace in the Pacific.	23 December	Wake Island surrenders to Japanese.
26 November	Secretary of State submits final proposals for adjustment of U. S.-Japanese relations.	25 December	British surrender Hong Kong.
27 November	Adm Stark, CNO, sends war warning to commanders of the Pacific and Asiatic Fleets.	26 December	Manila, P. I., declared an open city.
30 November	Japanese Foreign Minister Tojo rejects U. S. proposals for settling Far East crisis.	31 December	Adm C. W. Nimitz assumes command of Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor.
7 December	Japanese attack Pearl Harbor.	<i>1942</i>	
8 December	U. S. declares war on Japan. Japan attacks Allied bases in the Pacific and Far East, and lands on Batan Island north of Luzon, P. I., and on east coast of Malay Peninsula. U. S. Marines and other Allied nationals interned at Shanghai, Peiping, and Tientsin, China.	2 January	Manila and Cavite, P. I., fall to Japanese.
9 December	Japanese occupy Tarawa and Makin Islands in Gilberts.	11 January	Japanese begin invasion of Netherlands East Indies.
		22 January	Allied forces evacuate Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea.
		23 January	Japanese occupy Rabaul, New Britain, and land at Kieta on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands.
		24 January	Japanese land at Kavieng, New Ireland.
		1 February	U. S. carrier task forces raid Japanese positions in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

6 February	U. S. and Britain establish Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS).	28 May	U. S. forces arrive at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.
8 February	Japanese land at Gasmata, New Britain.	3 June	Japanese bomb Dutch Harbor; land on Kiska and Attu, Western Aleutians.
9 February	Japanese land at Singapore.	4-6 June	Battle of Midway.
15 February	Singapore surrenders.	14 June	First echelon of 1st MarDiv arrives at Wellington, New Zealand.
27 February	Battle of Java Sea.	19 June	VAdm Ghormley assumes command of South Pacific Area and South Pacific Forces.
1 March	Battle of Sunda Strait.	25 June	President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill conclude conference in Washington; decision reached for combined efforts to develop atomic bomb.
8 March	Japanese land at Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea.	18 July	Amphibious Force, South Pacific Area, is established under command of RAdm Turner.
9 March	Java surrenders to Japanese, ending conquest of Netherlands East Indies.	21 July	Japanese land at Buna, New Guinea.
10 March	Japanese invade Finschhafen, New Guinea.	7 August	1st MarDiv lands on Florida, Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Guadalcanal in Southern Solomons to launch the first U. S. offensive of the war.
11 March	Gen MacArthur leaves Philippines for Australia.	8 August	1st MarDiv wins control of Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo and captures airfield on Guadalcanal.
12 March	U. S. forces arrive in New Caledonia.	9 August	Battle of Savo Island forces U. S. ships to retire from Guadalcanal area, leaving control of waters temporarily to Japanese.
26 March	Adm King relieves Adm Stark as Chief of Naval Operations.	17 August	2d Raider Battalion (Carlson's Raiders) land from submarines at Makin Island in the Gilberts. Raid is completed following day.
29 March	Marines arrive at Efate, New Hebrides.		
30 March	Pacific Ocean divided into Pacific Ocean Areas under Adm Nimitz, and Southwest Pacific Area under Gen MacArthur.		
1 April	Japanese occupy Buka Island, Solomons.		
5 April	Manus Island, Admiralties, occupied by Japanese.		
9 April	Bataan falls to Japanese.		
18 April	Doolittle raid strikes Tokyo, Yokosuka, Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagoya.		
2 May	Japanese land on Florida Island, Solomons.		
3 May	Japanese occupy Tulagi, Solomons.		
4-8 May	Battle of the Coral Sea.		
6 May	Corregidor and Manila Bay forts surrender.		
12 May	Last U. S. troops in Philippines surrender on Mindanao.		

20 August	First fighter aircraft arrive on Henderson Field, Guadalcanal.	13 November	RAdm Callaghan's task group of cruisers and destroyers engages Japanese raiding group including two battleships, in second night of Battle of Guadalcanal. U. S. force heavily damaged, but Japanese retire.
21 August	Marines turn back first major Japanese attack on Guadalcanal in Battle of the Tenaru.	14 November	Japanese cruisers and destroyers bombard Henderson Field.
24-25 August	Naval Battle of Eastern Solomons.	15 November	RAdm Lee with two battleships and four destroyers turns back large Japanese naval group to end naval Battle of Guadalcanal.
13 September	Marines repulse second major Japanese ground attack at Guadalcanal in the Battle of the Ridge.	16 November	U. S. Army forces land south of Buna, New Guinea.
18 September	7th Marines arrive on Guadalcanal.	9 December	MajGen A. A. Vandegrift, CG 1st MarDiv, is relieved by MajGen A. M. Patch, CG Americal Division, as commanding general of Guadalcanal. 1st MarDiv makes preparations to retire from combat zone to rehabilitate and retrain.
11-12 October	Naval Battle of Cape Esperance. U. S. forces under Adm Spruance engage Japanese ships of the "Tokyo Express."	17 December	U. S. Army forces begin attacks against Japanese in the Mount Austen area.
13 October	164th Infantry Regiment of Americal Division arrives to reinforce 1st MarDiv.		
14 October	Japanese battleships and cruisers bombard Henderson Field.		
18 October	VAdm Halsey relieves VAdm Ghormley as Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force.		
20-25 October	Marines and Army troops fight off heavy ground attacks of major Japanese counteroffensive.		
26 October	Naval Battle of Santa Cruz Island. U. S. force sustains heavy loss, but checks Japanese movement toward Guadalcanal.		
8 November	Allied Expeditionary Force invades North Africa.		
12 November	Naval Battle of Guadalcanal (12-15 Nov) begins as Japanese aircraft attack U. S. transports off Guadalcanal.		
		1943	
		10 January	Gen Patch's XIV Corps on Guadalcanal begins offensive to the west.
		23 January	XIV Corps' westward advance captures Kokumbona on Guadalcanal coast.
		23 January	U. S.-Australian counteroffensive secures Buna-Sanananda area, New Guinea.
		29-30 January	Naval Battle of Rennell Island.

1 February-----	Japanese begin to evacuate troops from Guadalcanal.	9 February-----	Gen Patch's Cape Esperance envelopment force joins with western advance and Guadalcanal is declared secure.
8 February-----	Evacuation of some 11,000 Japanese troops from Guadalcanal is completed.		

Marine Task Organization and Command List¹

A. WAKE ATOLL (7-23 December 1941)²

MARINE DETACHMENT, WAKE

CO----- Maj James P. S. Devereux

1st Defense Battalion Detachment

CO----- Maj James P. S. Devereux

5-Inch Artillery Group

CO----- Maj George H. Potter
 Btry A----- 1stLt Clarence A. Barninger
 Btry B----- 1stLt Woodrow W. Kessler
 Btry L----- 2dLt John A. McAlister

3-Inch Antiaircraft Group

CO----- Capt Bryghte D. Godbold
 Btry D----- Capt Bryghte D. Godbold
 Btry E----- 1stLt William W. Lewis
 Btry F (Prov)---- MG Clarence B. McKinstry

Separate Batteries

Btry G----- Capt Wesley McC. Platt
 Btry H----- 2dLt Robert M. Hanna
 Btry I----- 2dLt Arthur A. Poindexter

Marine Fighter Squadron 211

CO----- Maj Paul A. Putnam

¹ Unless otherwise noted names, positions held, organization titles, and periods of service were taken from the muster rolls of the units concerned held in the Diary Unit, FilesSec, RecsBr, PersDept, HQMC. Officers are shown in the highest rank held during the period that they were assigned to the positions indicated.

² Because of the incomplete nature of the muster rolls of the Wake Detachment, reference has been made to research conducted by LtCol R. D. Heintz for *The Defense of Wake* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947) in order to complete this listing.

B. PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (7 December 1941-6 May 1942)³

4TH MARINES (REINFORCED)

CO----- Col Samuel L. Howard
 ExO----- Col Donald Curtis
 R-1----- Capt Robert B. Moore
 R-2----- 1stLt Robert F. Ruge (To
 24Dec)
 LtCol George D. Hamilton
 (From 25Dec)
 R-3----- Maj Frank P. Pyzick
 R-4----- Maj Reginald H. Ridgely,
 Jr. (To 3Jan)
 Maj Carl W. Meigs (From
 4Jan)
 HqCo----- Capt Robert Chambers, Jr.
 (WIA 6May)
 SerCo----- Maj Max W. Schaeffer (WIA
 6May)

1st Battalion, 4th Marines

CO----- LtCol Curtis T. Beecher
 ExO----- LtCol Samuel W. Freeny
 (WIA 29Apr)
 Bn-1----- Capt Golland L. Clark, Jr.
 Bn-2----- Capt Golland L. Clark, Jr.
 Bn-3----- LtCol Samuel W. Freeny
 (WIA 29Apr)
 Bn-4----- 1stLt Ralph R. Penick
 HqCo----- 1stLt Golland L. Clark, Jr.
 (To 25Dec)
 Capt Lewis H. Pickup
 (From 26Dec)
 A Co----- Maj Harry C. Lang (KIA
 5May)
 Capt Lewis H. Pickup (From
 5May)

³ After 28Feb42, no muster rolls reached HQMC from the 4th Mar and information presented after that period was taken from the comments of survivors on draft listings and the few existing records of the regiment's actions on Corregidor.

B Co..... Capt Paul A. Brown (WIA
4May)
1stLt Allan S. Manning
(Actg From 5May)
D Co..... Capt Noel O. Castle (KIA
6May)
BnResCo..... 1stLt Robert F. Jenkins, Jr.

2nd Battalion, 4th Marines

CO..... LtCol Herman R. Anderson
ExO..... Maj John J. Heil
Bn-1..... 1stLt Hugh R. Nutter (To
28Dec)
Capt Lloyd E. Wagner
(From 29Dec)
Bn-2..... 1stLt Hugh R. Nutter (To
28Dec)
Capt Lloyd E. Wagner
(29Dec-6Jan)
1stLt Sidney F. Jenkins
(From 7Jan)
Bn-3..... Maj John J. Heil
Bn-4..... Capt Austin C. Shofner
HqCo..... 1stLt Austin C. Shofner
(to 4Jan)
Capt Lloyd E. Wagner
(From 5Jan)
E Co..... Maj James V. Bradley, Jr.
F Co..... Capt Lloyd E. Wagner (To
28Dec)
Capt Clyde R. Huddleson
(From 29Dec)
HCo..... Capt Benjamin L. McMakin
(WIA 26Mar)
BnRes Co..... Capt Austin C. Shofner

3d Battalion, 4th Marines

CO..... LtCol John P. Adams
ExO..... Maj Andrew J. Mathiesen
Bn-1..... Capt George R. Weeks (To
31Dec)
Capt John W. Clark (From
1Jan)
Bn-2..... Capt William F. Prickett
Bn-3..... Maj Andrew J. Mathiesen
Bn-4..... Maj Carl W. Meigs (To
4Jan)
Capt Roy L. Robinton
(From 5Jan)
HqCo..... Capt George R. Weeks (To
31Dec)
Capt John W. Clark (From
1Jan)

I Co..... Maj Max Clark (WIA
24Apr, 29Apr)
K Co..... Capt John W. Clark (To
31Dec)
Maj George R. Weeks (From
1Jan)
L Co..... 2dLt Willard D. Holdredge
(To 23Dec)
1stLt Howard L. Davis
(24-31Dec)
Capt Willis T. Geisman
(From 1Jan, WIA 20Apr)
M Co..... Capt Ted E. Pulos
BnResCo..... 1stLt Clarence E. Van Ray

4th Battalion (Provisional), 4th Marines

CO..... Maj Francis H. Williams
(WIA 29Apr, 6May)
Bn-1..... Capt Calvin E. Chunn, USA
(WIA 6May)
Bn-2..... Capt Calvin E. Chunn, USA
(WIA 6May)
Bn-3..... 1stLt Otis E. Saalman, USA
Bn-4..... Ens John McClure, USNR
(WIA 6May)
Q Co..... Capt Paul E. Moore, USA
R Co..... Capt Harold E. Dalness,
USA
S Co..... Lt Edward N. Little, USN
(WIA 6May)
1stLt Otis E. Saalman, USA
(From 6May)
T Co..... Lt Bethel B. Otter, USN
(KIA 6May)
Capt Calvin E. Chunn, USA
(From 6May, WIA 6May)

Regimental Reserve

CO..... Maj Stuart W. King (To
17Feb)
Maj Max W. Schaeffer
(From 18Feb, WIA 6May)
O Co..... Capt Robert Chambers, Jr.
(WIA 6May)
P Co..... 1stLt William F. Hogaboom

*C. MIDWAY ISLANDS (4-5 June 1942)**6TH DEFENSE BATTALION (REINFORCED)*

CO..... Col Harold D. Shannon
H&S Btry..... Capt William P. Spenser

22d ProvMarCo... 1stLt George E. Metzenthin VMSB-241..... Maj Lofton R. Henderson
 23d ProvMarCo... Capt Boyd O. Whitney (MIA 4Jun)

5-Inch Artillery Group

CO..... LtCol Lewis A. Hohn
 H&S Btry..... LtCol Lewis A. Hohn
 Btry A..... Maj Loren S. Fraser
 Btry B..... Capt Rodney M. Handley
 Btry C..... Capt Donald N. Otis
 7" Btry..... Capt Ralph A. Collins, Jr.
 7" Btry..... Capt Harold R. Warner, Jr.
 3"/50 Btry..... Capt Jay H. Augustin
 3"/50 Btry..... Capt William R. Dorr, Jr.

3-Inch Antiaircraft Group

CO..... Maj Charles T. Tingle
 H&S Btry..... MG Maurice C. Pulliam
 Btry D..... Capt Jean H. Buckner
 Btry E..... Maj Hoyt McMillan
 Btry F..... Capt David W. Silvey
 Btry G (S/L)..... Capt Alfred L. Booth

Machine-Gun Group

CO..... Maj Robert E. Hommel
 H&S Btry..... 2dLt George K. Acker
 .50 Cal Btry..... Maj William E. Boles
 .30 Cal Btry..... Capt Edwin A. Law

3-Inch Antiaircraft Group, 3d Defense Battalion

CO..... Maj Chandler W. Johnson
 H&S Btry..... Maj Chandler W. Johnson
 Btry D..... Maj William S. McCormick
 Btry E..... Maj James S. O'Halloran
 Btry F..... Capt Arnold D. Swartz
 Btry K (37mm).... Capt Ronald K. Miller
 Btry L (20mm).... Capt Charles J. Seibert, II

2d Raider Battalion Detachment

CO..... Capt Donald H. Hastie
 Co C..... Capt Donald H. Hastie
 Co D..... 1stLt John Apergis

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 22

CO..... LtCol Ira L. Kimes
 H&S Sqn..... 1stLt Charles F. Hurlbut
 VMF-221..... Maj Floyd B. Parks (MIA
 4Jun)
 Capt Kirk Armistead (From
 4Jun)

Maj Benjamin W. Norris
 (MIA 4Jun)
 Capt Marshall A. Tyler
 (From 4Jun)

D. GUADALCANAL (7 August 1942-8 February
 1943) ⁴

FIRST MARINE DIVISION (REINFORCED)

Division Headquarters

(7Aug42-8Dec42)

CG..... MajGen Alexander A. Vandegrift
 ADC..... BriGen William H. Rupertus
 CofS..... Col William C. James (To
 21Sep)
 Col Gerald C. Thomas
 (From 21Sep)
 D-1..... Col Robert C. Kilmartin, Jr.
 (To 21Sep)
 Maj James C. Murray, Jr.
 (From 22 Sep)
 D-2..... LtCol Frank B. Goettge
 (MIA 12Aug)
 LtCol Edmund J. Buckley
 (From 14Aug)
 D-3..... LtCol Gerald C. Thomas
 (To 20Sep)
 LtCol Merrill B. Twining
 (From 21Sep)
 D-4..... LtCol Randolph McC. Pate
 (To 21Oct)
 LtCol Raymond P. Coffman
 (21Oct-25Nov)
 LtCol William S. Fellers
 (From 26Nov)
 HqBn(Orgd 2D).... LtCol Edwin J. Farrell

1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion

(7Aug42-22Dec42)

CO..... LtCol Walter W. Barr

1st Aviation Engineer Battalion

(18Sep42-8Feb43)

CO..... Maj Thomas F. Riley

⁴ Unit commanders are listed only for those periods when their units are entitled to battle participation credit as indicated by the dates below unit designations. In the case of Marine air units, many of which participated in the battle as flight or advance echelons only, the unit commander who was actually in the Guadalcanal area is shown where muster rolls reveal this information.

<p><i>1st Engineer Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Maj James G. Frazer (To 24Oct) Maj Henry H. Crockett (From 25Oct)</p> <p><i>1st Medical Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Cdr Don S. Knowlton, MC (To 14Dec) LCdr Everett B. Keck, MC (From 15Dec)</p> <p><i>1st Parachute Battalion</i> (7Aug42-18Sep42)</p> <p>CO----- Maj Robert H. Williams (WIA 7Aug) Maj Charles A. Miller (8Aug-5Sep) Capt Harry L. Torgerson (6-8Sep) Maj Charles A. Miller (9-17Sep) Capt Harry L. Torgerson (From 18Sep)</p> <p><i>1st Pioneer Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Col George R. Rowan (To 19Sep) Maj Robert G. Ballance (From 20Sep)</p> <p><i>1st Raider Battalion</i> (7Aug42-16Oct42)</p> <p>CO----- Col Merritt A. Edson (To 20Sep) LtCol Samuel B. Griffith, II (From 22Sep, WIA 27Sep) Capt Ira J. Irwin (From 27Sep)</p> <p><i>1st Service Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- LtCol Hawley C. Waterman</p> <p><i>1st Special Weapons Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- LtCol Robert B. Luckey (To 15Oct) Maj Richard W. Wallace (From 16Oct)</p>		<p><i>Forward Echelon, 1st Tank Battalion</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Maj Harvey S. Walseth</p> <p><i>1st Marines</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Col Clifton B. Cates 1st Bn----- LtCol Lenard B. Cresswell 2d Bn----- LtCol Edwin A. Pollock (To 22Sep) LtCol William W. Stickney (From 24Sep) 3d Bn----- LtCol William N. McKelvey, Jr.</p> <p><i>5th Marines</i> (7Aug42-9Dec42)</p> <p>CO----- Col Leroy P. Hunt (To 19Sep) Col Merritt A. Edson (From 21Sep) 1st Bn----- LtCol William E. Maxwell (To 28Aug) Maj Donald W. Fuller (30 Aug-11Oct) Maj William P. Thyson, Jr. (12Oct) Maj William K. Enright (13-23Oct) Maj William P. Thyson, Jr. (24-30Oct) Maj William K. Enright (From 31Oct) 2d Bn----- LtCol Harold E. Rosecrans (WIA 11Sep) Capt Joseph J. Dudkowski (11-17Sep) LtCol Walker A. Reves (18-24Sep) Capt Joseph J. Dudkowski (25-30Sep) Maj David S. McDougal (From 1Oct, WIA 8Oct) Maj William J. Piper, Jr. (8-11Oct) Maj Lewis W. Walt (From 12Oct) 3d Bn----- LtCol Frederick C. Biebush (To 21Sep) Maj Robert O. Bowen (From 22Sep)</p>	
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<i>7th Marines</i> (18Sep42-5Jan43)		5th Bn-----	LtCol Eugene H. Price (To 30Oct)
CO-----	Col James C. Webb (To 19Sep)		Maj Noah P. Wood, Jr. (From 1Nov)
	Col Amor LeR. Sims (From 20Sep)		<i>2d Raider Battalion</i> (4Nov42-17Dec42)
1st Bn-----	LtCol Lewis B. Puller (WIA 8Nov)	CO-----	LtCol Evans F. Carlson
	Maj John E. Weber (9-17Nov)		<i>3d Barrage Balloon Squadron</i> (8Sep42-8Feb43)
	LtCol Lewis B. Puller (From 18Nov)	CO-----	Capt Robert C. McDermond
2d Bn-----	LtCol Herman H. Hanneken (To 17Nov)		<i>3d Defense Battalion</i> (7Aug42-8Feb43)
	Maj Odell M. Conoley (18-28Nov)	CO-----	Col Robert H. Pepper (To 28Nov)
	LtCol Herman H. Hanneken (From 29Nov)		LtCol Harold C. Roberts (29Nov-11Jan)
3d Bn-----	LtCol Edwin J. Farrell (To 21Sep)		LtCol Samuel G. Taxis (From 12Jan)
	LtCol William R. Williams (From 24Sep)		<i>Detachment A, 5th Defense Battalion</i> <i>Redesignated 14th Defense Battalion, 15Jan43</i> (8Sep42-8Feb43)
<i>11th Marines</i> (7Aug42-22Dec42)		CO-----	LtCol William F. Parks (To 5Dec)
CO-----	BriGen Pedro A. del Valle		Col Galen M. Sturgis (From 5Dec)
1st Bn-----	LtCol Joseph R. Knowlan (To 18Oct)		<i>9th Defense Battalion</i> (30Nov42-8Feb43)
	LtCol Manly L. Curry (18 Oct-27Nov)	CO-----	Col David R. Nimmer (To 2Feb)
	LtCol Donovan D. Sult (28Nov-20Dec)		LtCol William J. Scheyer (From 3Feb)
	Maj Lewis J. Fields (From 21Dec)		SECOND MARINE DIVISION
2d Bn-----	LtCol Edward J. Hagen (To 19Oct)		<i>Advance Echelon, Division Headquarters</i> (4Jan43-8Feb43)
	Maj Forest C. Thompson (20-30Oct)	CG-----	BriGen Alphonse De Carre
	Maj Lewis A. Ennis (1-5Nov)	CofS-----	Col George F. Stockes
	Maj Forest C. Thompson (6-11Nov)	D-1-----	Maj Lawrence C. Hays, Jr. (To 5Feb)
	Maj Lewis A. Ennis (12-30Nov)		Capt Percy H. Uhlinger (From 6Feb)
	Maj Forest C. Thompson (From 1Dec)	D-2-----	Maj Thomas J. Colley
3d Bn-----	LtCol James J. Keating	D-3-----	LtCol John H. Coffman (To 21Jan)
4th Bn-----	LtCol Melvin E. Fuller (To 26Oct)		LtCol Jesse S. Cook, Jr. (From 21Jan)
	Maj Carl G. F. Korn (27-31Oct)	D-4-----	Maj George N. Carroll
	Capt Albert H. Potter (From 1Nov)		

2d Special Weapons Battalion

(7 Aug 42-8 Feb 43)

CO..... LtCol Paul D. Sherman (To
8 Jan)
Maj Guy E. Tannyhill
(9-12 Jan)
LtCol Paul D. Sherman
(From 13 Jan)

2d Marines

(7 Aug 42-31 Jan 43)

CO..... Col John M. Arthur
1st Bn..... LtCol Robert E. Hill (WIA
11 Nov)
Maj Wood B. Kyle (From
11 Nov)
2d Bn..... LtCol Orin K. Pressley (To
14 Dec)
Maj Ewart S. Laue (From
14 Dec)
3d Bn..... LtCol Robert G. Hunt

6th Marines

(4 Jan 43-8 Feb 43)

CO..... Col Gilder D. Jackson, Jr.
1st Bn..... LtCol Russell Lloyd
2d Bn..... Maj Raymond L. Murray
3d Bn..... Maj William A. Kengla

8th Marines

(2 Nov 42-8 Feb 43)

CO..... Col Richard H. Jeschke
1st Bn..... LtCol Miles S. Newton (To
22 Nov)
LtCol Joseph P. McCaffery
(From 23 Nov)
2d Bn..... LtCol John H. Cook, Jr.
3d Bn..... LtCol Augustus H. Fricke

1st Battalion, 10th Marines

(4 Nov 42-8 Feb 43)

CO..... LtCol Presley M. Rixey

2d Battalion, 10th Marines

(4 Jan 43-8 Feb 43)

CO..... Maj George R. E. Shell

3d Battalion, 10th Marines

(7 Aug 42-8 Feb 43)

CO..... LtCol Manly L. Curry (To
17 Oct)
LtCol Donovan D. Sult
(18 Oct-27 Nov)
LtCol Manly L. Curry
(From 28 Nov)

2d Aviation Engineer Battalion

(30 Jan 43-8 Feb 43)

CO..... Maj Charles O. Clark

11th Defense Battalion

(17 Jan 43-8 Feb 43)

CO..... Col Charles N. Muldrow

MARINE AIR UNITS

Headquarters Detachment, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing
(3 Sep 42-8 Feb 43)

CG..... MajGen Roy S. Geiger
CofS..... BriGen Louis B. Woods
W-1..... LtCol Perry O. Parmelee
(To 20 Nov)
Capt James G. Hopper
(21 Nov-20 Dec)
LtCol Thomas G. Ennis
(From 21 Dec)
W-2..... LtCol John C. Munn
W-3..... Col Lawson H. M. Sander-
son (To 31 Dec)
Col Christian F. Schilt
(From 1 Jan)
W-4..... Col Christian F. Schilt
(To 31 Dec)
LtCol Albert D. Cooley
(From 1 Jan)
HqSq-1..... Capt Herman J. Jesse

Forward Echelon, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing

(26 Dec 42-8 Feb 43)

CG..... BriGen Francis P. Mul-
cahy
CofS..... Col Walter G. Farrell
W-1..... 2dLt Robert E. Coddington
W-2..... LtCol Elmer H. Salzman

W-3----- LtCol Joe A. Smoak
(To 29Jan)
LtCol William C. Lemly
(From 30Jan)
W-4----- LtCol Franklin G. Cowie
HqSq-2----- Maj William K. Snyder

Marine Aircraft Group 14
(16Oct42-8Feb43)

CO----- LtCol Albert D. Cooley
(To 17Dec)
Col William O. Brice
(From 19Dec)
HqSq-14----- Capt Claude J. Carlson, Jr.
(To 17Nov)
Capt Stanley M. Adams
(From 18Nov)
SMS-14----- Maj Arthur R. Stacey

Marine Aircraft Group 23
(20Aug42-4Nov42)

CO----- Col William J. Wallace
HqSq-23----- MG Harland W. Bond
(To 24Oct)
LtCol Charles L. Fike
(From 25Oct)
SMS-23----- 2dLt Joseph A. Pawloski

Advance Detachments, Marine Aircraft Group 25
(3Sep42-8Feb43)

CO----- LtCol Perry K. Smith
HqSq-25----- Maj Leonard W. Ashwell
(To 17Nov)
Capt Dave J. Woodward, Jr.
(From 18 Nov)
SMS-25----- Maj Leonard W. Ashwell
(To 23Dec)
Capt Ralph R. Yeaman
(From 24Dec)

Marine Fighter Squadron 112
(2Nov42-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Paul J. Fontana
(To 31Dec)
2dLt Alexander A. Case
(1-6Jan)
Maj Paul J. Fontana
(From 7Jan)

Marine Fighter Squadron 121
(2Oct42-28Jan43)

CO----- Maj Leonard K. Davis
(WIA 11Nov, To 16Dec)
MG William F. Wilson (17-
31 Dec)
Maj Donald K. Yost (From
1Jan)

Marine Fighter Squadron 122
(12Nov42-8Feb43)

CO----- Capt Nathan T. Post, Jr.
(To 21Nov)
Capt James R. Anderson
(22Nov-10Dec)
2dLt John F. Tenvole (11-
23 Dec)
Maj Elmer E. Brackett, Jr.
(24-29Dec)
Capt Nathan T. Post, Jr.
(30Dec-11Jan)
Maj Elmer E. Brackett, Jr.
(From 12Jan)

Flight Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 123
(3Feb43-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Edward W. Johnston

Flight Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 124
(3Feb43-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj William E. Gise

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 131
(11Nov42-8Feb43)

CO----- LtCol Paul Moret (To
20Nov)
Capt Jens C. Aggerbeck, Jr.
(From 21Nov)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 132
(1Nov42-19Jan43)

CO----- Maj Joseph Sailer, Jr. (KIA
7Dec)
Maj Louis B. Robertshaw
(From 7Dec)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 141
(23Sep42-17Jan43)

CO----- Maj Gordon A. Bell (KIA
14Oct)
1stLt Wortham S. Ashcroft
(From 14Oct, KIA 8Nov)
1stLt Robert M. Patterson
(8-11Nov)
2dLt Walter R. Bartosh (12-
17Nov)
Maj George A. Sarles
(18Nov-16Dec)
Capt Claude A. Carlson, Jr.
(From 17Dec)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 142
(12Nov42-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Robert H. Richard

Flight Echelon, Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 144
(5Feb43-8Feb43)

CO----- Capt Roscoe N. Nelson

Flight Echelon, Marine Utility Squadron 152
(21Oct42-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Elmore W. Seeds

*Flight Echelon, Marine Photographic
Squadron 154*
(10Nov42-8Feb43)

CO----- LtCol Elliot E. Bard

Flight Echelon, Marine Fighter Squadron 212
(17Aug42-21Nov42)

CO----- LtCol Harold W. Bauer
(KIA 14Nov)
Maj Frederick R. Payne, Jr.
(From 14Nov)

Marine Fighter Squadron 223
(20Aug42-16Oct42)

CO----- Maj John L. Smith

Marine Fighter Squadron 224
(30Aug42-2Nov42)

CO----- Maj Robert E. Galer

*Flight Echelon, Marine Scout-Bomber
Squadron 231*

(30Aug42-14Nov42)

CO----- Maj Leo R. Smith (To
18Sep)
Capt Ruben Iden (From
19Sep, KIA 20Sep)
Capt Elmer G. Glidden, Jr.
(From 20Sep)

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 232
(20Aug42-2Nov42)

CO----- LtCol Richard C. Mangrum

Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 233
(25Dec42-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Clyde T. Mattison (To
19Jan)
Capt Elmer L. Gilbert
(From 20Jan)

*Flight Echelon, Marine Scout-Bomber
Squadron 234*
(28Jan43-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj William D. Roberson

Marine Observation Squadron 251
(19Aug42-8Feb43)

CO----- LtCol John N. Hart (To
29Oct)
LtCol Charles H. Hayes
(30Oct-30Nov)
Capt Ralph R. Yeaman
(1-7Dec)
Maj William R. Campbell
(8-10Dec)
Maj Joseph N. Renner
(From 11Dec)

Marine Utility Squadron 253
(3Sep42-8Feb43)

CO----- Maj Harold A. Johnson (To
11Oct)
Maj Henry C. Lane (From
12Oct)

Marine Casualties¹

Location and date	KIA		DOW		WIA		MIAPD		KDPOW		TOTAL	
	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted
Marines												
Guam (7-10 Dec 41)		4		1		13				5		23
Wake Atoll (7-23 Dec 41)	4	46			6	38		6		13	10	103
Philippines (7 Dec 41-6 May 42)	43	267		5	33	324		16	14	225	90	837
Midway Islands (7 Dec 41-6 Jun 42)	2	8	1		14	25	23	14			40	47
Makin (17-18 Aug 42)	1	17			2	14		12			3	43
Guadalcanal (7 Aug 42-8 Feb 43)	71	1,026	11	98	223	2,693	52	246			357	4,063
Naval Medical Personnel Organic to Marine Units												
Philippines (7 Dec 41-6 May 42)					2				3	25	5	25
Guadalcanal (7 Aug 42-8 Feb 43)	8	23	1	4	15	86					24	113

¹ These final Marine casualty figures were compiled from records furnished by Statistics Unit, PersAcctSec, (RecsBr, PersDept, HQMS. They are audited to include 26 Aug 52. Naval casualties were taken from NavMed P-5021, *The History of the Medical Department of the Navy in World War II*, 2 vols (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), II, 1-84. The key to the abbreviations used at the head of columns in the table follows: KIA, Killed in Action; DOW, Died of Wounds; WIA, Wounded in Action; MIAPD, Missing in Action, Presumed Dead; KDPOW, Killed or Died while a Prisoner of War. Because of the method used in reporting casualties during World War II a substantial number of DOW figures are also included in the WIA column.

First Marine Division

Operation Order—Guadalcanal

FIRST MARINE DIVISION
FLEET MARINE FORCE
Wellington, N. Z.
[20 July 1942]¹

OPERATION ORDER

No. 7-42

Maps: H. O. CHART #2896 (Solomon Islands) reproduced by D-2 Section.
D-2 Section Map North Coast Guadalcanal Island—Lunga Point to Aola, 9 Sections, 15 July, 1942, RF 1/24,000.
D-2 Section Map Tulagi and adjacent islands, 7/14/42, (4 sheets) c RF 1/12,000.
D-2 Section—Special map Tulagi—1/12,000, 15 July, 1942.

TASK ORGANIZATION

(a) COMBAT GROUP A [5th Mar, Reinf] (less Combat Team #2 (less Btry E 11th Marines))	Col. LeRoy P. Hunt, USMC.
(b) COMBAT GROUP B [1st Mar, Reinf]	Col. Clifton B. Cates, USMC.
(c) TULAGI GROUP 1st Raider Bn Combat Team #2 (less Btry E 11th Marines)	LtCol. Merritt A. Edson, USMC.
(d) GAVUTU GROUP First Parachute Battalion	Maj. Robert H. Williams, USMC.
(e) SUPPORT GROUP 1st Eng Bn (less Cos A, B, & C) 11th Marines (less 1st, 2d, 3d and 4th Bns) 1st Spl Wpns Bn (less 1st & 3d Pl Btry A) 1st Pion Bn (less Cos A & B)	Col. Pedro A. del Valle, USMC.
(f) DIVISION RESERVE 2d Marines (Reinforced) (less Combat Team A)	Col. John M. Arthur, USMC.
(g) FLORIDA GROUP Combat Team A.	Maj. Robert E. Hill, USMC.
(h) THIRD DEFENSE BATTALION	Col. Robert H. Pepper, USMC.

1. See Annex A Intelligence

Naval Attack Force will furnish naval gunfire and air support (see Annexes B and C gunfire and air support plans respectively). Minesweepers will cover landing of FLORIDA GROUP by concentrations on BUNGANA ISLAND [south of Halavo Peninsula] and GAVUTU.

¹ With the exception of the information in brackets which was added to assist the reader, this operation order is an *exact* transcription of a copy of the original order contained in *Final/Rept*, Phase I, Annex F. Map Nos. 13, 14, and 15 of this volume should be used as references with the order.

2. This Division will attack and destroy the hostile garrisons of TULAGI, GUADALCANAL, GAVUTU, and MAKAMBO by simultaneous landings on D day. It will then organize and defend those islands.

For Transport Area, Line of Departure, beaches, objectives, Boundaries see Operation Overlay Annex D.

3. (a) Land on Beach RED at Zero Hour with 2 CTs in assault on a front of 1600 yards seize beach-head (see operation overlay). When passed through by Combat Group B, Combat Group A (less CTs #2 & 3) attack toward LUNGA with its right resting on the shore line. Seize the line of the TENARU RIVER. Combat Team #3 attack and seize line of woods running southeast from TENAVATU [eastern flank of Red Beach] (see operation overlay). Hold that line until relieved by Support Group. Then operate as directed by Task Organization Commander.

(b) Land on Beach RED at Zero Hour plus 50 minutes (see operation overlay) pass through right of Combat Group A and attack on magnetic azimuth 260°. Seize grassy knoll 4 miles south of LUNGA POINT. Be prepared for further advance.

Formation—Column of battalions echeloned to the left rear. Maintain contact with Combat Group A on right.

(c) Land on front of 500 yards on Beach BLUE at H hour, and seize that portion of TULAGI ISLAND lying northwest of line A (see D-2 Section Special Map TULAGI 1/12,000, 15 July 1942). Fire GREEN STAR CLUSTER to call for five minutes air and naval bombardment of TULAGI southeast of line A, after H plus 1 hour. Upon completion of bombing and lifting of naval gunfire, attack and seize the remainder of TULAGI ISLAND. Upon completion seizure of TULAGI ISLAND 1st Raider Bn reembark at Beach Blue and report completion of reembarkation to Division Headquarters, prepared for further landings. Upon seizure of TULAGI, control passes to Commander Combat Team #2. Combat Team #2 then reembark sufficient troops and seize MAKAMBO ISLAND, then organize and defend those islands. Following seizure of TULAGI and MAKAMBO, and of GAVUTU and TANAMBOGO by 1st Parachute Battalion, relieve 1st Parachute Battalion with one rifle company plus one machine gun platoon.

(d) Land on east coast of GAVUTU ISLAND at H plus 4 hours, and seize that island, then seize TANAMBOGO. Fire GREEN STAR CLUSTER to call for five minutes naval gunfire on TANAMBOGO ISLAND. Reembark upon relief prepared for employment elsewhere.

(e) Land on Beach RED on order, assume control of 2d and 3d Battalions 11th Marines, provide artillery support for the attack, and coordinate AA and close in ground defense of Beachhead area.

(f) Be prepared to land Combat Team B less all reinforcing units on GAVUTU ISLAND at H plus 4 hours. Be prepared to attach Combat Team C less all reinforcing units to the TULAGI GROUP.

(g) Land 1st Battalion 2d Marines (less one rifle company and one machine gun platoon) on promontory at x3022 [Halavo Peninsula] at H hour plus 30 minutes and seize village of Halavo. Then support by fire the attack of the 1st Parachute Bn on GAVUTU. Land one (1) rifle company reinforced by one machine gun platoon at H minus 20 minutes in cove at W7837 [Haleta] and seize and hold point to southeast thereof.

(h) Execute following on order :

(1) Land Battalion less 1/3 AA elements on Beach RED. These pass to CO Support Group on landing. Assist in AA defense of beach area.

(2) Land 1/3 AA elements on TULAGI and GAVUTU, and provide AA defense that area.

(x) (1) Land tanks with combat groups and move to cover near east boundary of beachhead. Tanks not to be committed except on division order.

(2) Land 1st and 3d platoons Battery A Special Weapons Battalion on flanks of beach and furnish AA defense beach area, 1st Platoon to right 3d platoon to left. These revert to battalion control upon landing of Headquarters 1st Special Weapons Battalion.

(3) Scout cars will not land.

(4) All artillery of combat troops will be landed with those groups and pass to control 11th Marines upon landing 11th Marines Headquarters.

(5) Assistant Division Commander will command operations in TULAGI-GAVUTU-FLORIDA Area.

4. See Administrative Order.

5. (a) See Annex E, Signal Communication.

(b) Command Posts afloat:

1st Mar Div	MC CAWLEY (AP10)
Combat Group A	AMERICAN LEGION (AP35)
Combat Group B	BARNETT (AP11)
TULAGI Group	APD
GAVUTU Group	HEYWOOD (AP12)
Support Group	HUNTER LIGGETT (AP27)
Division Reserve	CRESCENT CITY (AP40)
FLORIDA Group	PRESIDENT JACKSON (AP37)
3d Defense Bn	ZEILIN (AP9)









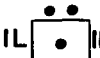














(c) Axis of Signal Communication all units:
CP afloat—locations ashore to be reported.

(d) Use local time, zone minus eleven (zone suffix letter Love), in all communications with Division.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL VANDEGRIFT

W. C. JAMES,
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps,
Chief of Staff.

Military Map Symbols

SIZE SYMBOLS		UNIT SYMBOLS	
•	Squad		Pioneer
••	Section		Rdr Raider
•••	Platoon		Tank
I	Company or Battery	MISCELLANEOUS SYMBOLS	
II	Battalion or Squadron		Command Post
III	Regiment or Air Group		Observation Post
x	Brigade		Boundary (battalion)
x x	Division or Wing		Aid Station (battalion)
UNIT SYMBOLS		EXAMPLES	
	Basic Unit		1L 1DB 1st Sec, L Btry, 1st Def Bn
	Air		B 5 CoB, 5th Mar Regt
	Amphibian Tractor		1Rdr 1st Rdr Bn
	Antiaircraft		11 11th Mar Regt
	DB Defense Battalion		2 11 7 OP, 2d Bn, 7th Mar Regt
	E Engineer		xx 1 CP, 1st Mar Div
	Field Artillery		
	Infantry		
	Para Parachute		
	Prcht		

Guide to Abbreviations

AA.....	Antiaircraft	C.....	Combat
AAA.....	Antiaircraft Artillery	CA.....	Coast Artillery
AAF.....	Army Air Force	Cactus.....	Code Name for Guadalcanal
ABC.....	American-British-Canadian	Cal.....	Caliber
ABDA.....	American-British-Dutch-Australian	CAM.....	Combined Army & Marine
Acct.....	Accounting	Capt.....	Captain
Act.....	Action	"Catalina".....	PBY patrol bomber made by Consolidated-Vultee
ADC.....	Assistant Division Commander	CCS.....	Combined Chiefs of Staff
Adm.....	Admiral	Cdr.....	Commander
Adv.....	Advance	CG.....	Commanding General
AF.....	Asiatic Fleet	Ch.....	Chief
Air.....	Aircraft	Chap.....	Chapter
AKA.....	Attack Cargo Ship	Chmn.....	Chairman
Amer.....	American	CinC.....	Commander in Chief
Amtrack.....	Amphibian Tractor	CMC.....	Commandant of the Marine Corps
An.....	Annual	CNO.....	Chief of Naval Operations
Anzac.....	Australia-New Zealand Area	CO.....	Commanding Officer
AP.....	Navy Transport	Co.....	Company
APA.....	Attack Transport	CofS.....	Chief of Staff
APC.....	Small Coastal Transport	CofSA.....	Chief of Staff, U. S. Army
APD.....	Destroyer Transport	Col.....	Colonel
AR.....	Action Report	Cont.....	Continuing
Arcadia.....	U. S.-British Conference (December 1941-January 1942)	Com.....	Commander; Commandant
AsFlt.....	Asiatic Fleet	Comb.....	Combined
ATIS.....	Allied Translator and Interrogator Section	Comm.....	Communication
"Avenger".....	TBF-#, torpedo-bomber made by Grumman	CP.....	Command Post
B.....	Base	C&R.....	Construction & Repair
B-17.....	Army heavy bomber, the "Flying Fortress"	Cru.....	Cruiser
BAR.....	Browning Automatic Rifle	CSP.....	Communication Security Publication
Bd.....	Board	CT.....	Combat Team
BLT.....	Battalion Landing Team	CTF.....	Commander Task Force
BM.....	Boatswain's Mate	CTG.....	Commander Task Group
Bn.....	Battalion	CWO.....	Chief (Commissioned) Warrant Officer
Br.....	Branch	D-1.....	Division Personnel Office(r)
Brig.....	Brigade	D-2.....	Division Intelligence Office(r)
BriGen.....	Brigadier General	D-3.....	Division Operations Office(r)
Btry.....	Battery	D-4.....	Division Logistics Office(r)
Bu.....	Bureau	DA.....	Department of the Army
BuEng.....	Bureau of Engineering	"Dauntless".....	SBD-#, scout-bomber made by Douglas
BuShips.....	Bureau of Ships	DC.....	Dental Corps (Navy)

Def.....	Defense	J.....	Joint
Dept.....	Department	JAG.....	Judge Advocate General
Des.....	Destroyer	JASCO.....	Joint Assault Signal Company
Dev.....	Development	JCS.....	Joint Chiefs of Staff
"Devastator"....	TBD-#, torpedo-bomber made by Douglas	JIC.....	Joint Intelligence Center
Dir.....	Director	JG.....	Junior Grade
Disp.....	Dispatch	Jnl.....	Journal
Div.....	Division	"Kate".....	Japanese torpedo-bomber
Doc.....	Document	KDPOW.....	Killed or Died While a Prisoner of War
DOW.....	Died of Wounds	Lan.....	Landing
DUKW.....	Amphibious Truck	Lant.....	Atlantic (Fleet)
Encl.....	Enclosure	LCdr.....	Lieutenant Commander
Eng.....	Engineer	LCM.....	Mechanized Landing Craft
Enl.....	Enlisted	LCVP.....	Vehicle and Personnel Landing Craft
Ens.....	Ensign	LST.....	Tank Landing Ship
ExO.....	Executive Officer	Lt.....	Lieutenant
Ext.....	Extension	Ltr.....	Letter
F4F-#.....	"Wildcat" fighter made by Grumman	LVT.....	Landing Vehicle Tracked
FAdm.....	Fleet Admiral	LVT(A).....	Landing Vehicle Tracked (Armored)
FEAF.....	Far East Air Force	MAG.....	Marine Aircraft Group
FEC.....	Far East Command	Maj.....	Major
Flex.....	Fleet Landing Exercise	Mar.....	Marine(s)
Flot.....	Flotilla	MarCor.....	Marine Corps
Flt.....	Fleet	MAW.....	Marine Aircraft Wing
FMF.....	Fleet Marine Force	Mbr.....	Member
FO.....	Forward Observer	MC.....	Marine Corps; Medical Corps (Navy)
For.....	Force	MCEC.....	Marine Corps Educational Center
Fourteen.....	14th Naval District	MCO.....	Marine Corps Order
G-2.....	Intelligence Office(r), Division or above	MCS.....	Marine Corps Schools
Gar.....	Garrison	MD.....	Marine Detachment
Gen.....	General	Med.....	Medical
GHQ.....	General Headquarters	Memo.....	Memorandum
Gnd.....	Ground	MG.....	Marine Gunner; Machine Gun
GPO.....	Government Printing Office	MGC.....	The Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps
Gru.....	Group	MI.....	Military Intelligence
Gun.....	Gunnery	MIA.....	Missing in Action
Hist.....	History; Historical	MIAPD.....	Missing in Action, Presumed Dead
H. O.....	Hydrographic Office	Mil.....	Military
Hq.....	Headquarters	MIS.....	Military Intelligence Service
HMSO.....	His (Her) Majesty's Stationery Office	MLR.....	Main Line of Resistance
HQMC.....	Headquarters Marine Corps	Mm.....	Millimeter
H&S.....	Headquarters & Service	Mph.....	Miles per hour
Hydro.....	Hydrographic Office	MS.....	Manuscript
IBC.....	Iceland Base Command	MSgt.....	Master Sergeant
IJA.....	Imperial Japanese Army	MTB.....	Motor Torpedo Boat
IJN.....	Imperial Japanese Navy	NAD.....	Naval Ammunition Depot
Inf.....	Infantry		
Inst.....	Instruction		
Is.....	Island		

NAS.....	Naval Air Station	RM.....	Royal Marine(s)
Nav.....	Navy; Naval	RMA.....	Royal Marine Artillery
ND.....	Navy Department	RN.....	Royal Navy
NHD.....	Naval History Division	SBD-#.....	"Dauntless" scout-bomber made by Douglas
NGF.....	Naval Gunfire	SB2U-#.....	"Vindicator" scout-bomber made by Vought-Sikorsky
NOB.....	Naval Operating Base	SCAP.....	Supreme Commander Allied Powers
NRMC.....	Naval Records Management Center (Alexandria, Va.)	Sch.....	School
NSD.....	Naval Supply Depot	Sec.....	Section
OCMH.....	Office of the Chief of Military History, U. S. Army	Sen.....	Senior
Off.....	Officer(s)	Sep.....	Separate
Ofi.....	Official	Ser.....	Service
ONI.....	Office of Naval Intelligence	SFCP.....	Shore Fire Control Party
OP.....	Observation Post	Sgt.....	Sergeant
OPlan.....	Operation Plan	Sixteen.....	16th Naval District
OpOrd.....	Operation Order	S/L.....	Searchlight
Ops.....	Operations	SM.....	Special Manual
P&P.....	Plans and Policies Division, Headquarters Marine Corps	SMS.....	Marine Service Squadron
PAA.....	Pan American Airways	SNLF.....	Japanese Special Naval Land- ing Force
Pac.....	Pacific (Fleet)	So.....	South
Para.....	Parachute	Spl.....	Special
Pat.....	Patrol	Sqn.....	Squadron
PB.....	Patrol Boat	SS.....	Special Staff
PBY.....	"Catalina" patrol bomber made by Consolidated-Vultee	SSgt.....	Staff Sergeant
PC.....	Patrol Craft	SWPA.....	Southwest Pacific Area
Pers.....	Personnel	TAGO.....	The Adjutant General's Office
Phib.....	Amphibious	TBD-#.....	"Devastator" torpedo-bomber made by Douglas
Phil.....	Philippine	TBF-#.....	"Avenger" torpedo-bomber made by Grumman
Pion.....	Pioneer	TF.....	Task Force
Pl.....	Platoon	TG.....	Task Group
Proj.....	Project	Tng.....	Training
Prov.....	Provisional	T/O.....	Table of Organization
POA.....	Pacific Ocean Area	TQM.....	Transport Quartermaster
POW.....	Prisoner of War	Trans.....	Transport
PT.....	Motor Torpedo Boat	TSgt.....	Technical Sergeant
QM.....	Quartermaster	U/F.....	Unit of fire, a unit of measure- ment for ammunition sup- ply. It represents a specific number of rounds of ammu- nition per weapon.
R-2.....	Regimental Intelligence Of- fice(r)	US.....	United States (Fleet)
R-4.....	Regimental Logistics Office(r)	USA.....	United States Army
RAAF.....	Royal Australian Air Force	USAFFE.....	United States Army Forces in the Far East
RAdm.....	Rear Admiral	USFIP.....	United States Forces in the Philippines
RAN.....	Royal Australian Navy	USMC.....	United States Marine Corps
RCT.....	Regimental Combat Team	USN.....	United States Navy
Rdr.....	Raider		
Rec.....	Record(s)		
Reinf.....	Reinforced		
Rept.....	Report		
RF.....	Representative Fraction (Map Scale)		
RLT.....	Regimental Landing Team		

USNI.....	United States Naval Institute	W-2.....	Wing Intelligence Office(r)
USNR.....	United States Naval Reserve	W-3.....	Wing Operations Office(r)
USS.....	United States Ship	W-4.....	Wing Logistics Office(r)
USSBS.....	United States Strategic Bomb- ing Survey	Watchtower....	Code name for the Guadal- canal-Tulagi Operation
VAdm.....	Vice Admiral	WD.....	War Department
VF.....	Navy Fighter Squadron	WDC.....	War Documents Center
"Vindicator"....	SB2U-#, scout-bomber made by Vought-Sikorsky	Wes.....	West
VMF.....	Marine Fighter Squadron	"Wildcat".....	F4F-#, fighter made by Grum- man
VMJ.....	Marine Utility Squadron	WO.....	Warrant Officer
VMSB.....	Marine Scout-Bomber Squad- ron	WPL.....	War Plan
VP.....	Navy Patrol Squadron	Wpns.....	Weapons
VS.....	Navy Scouting Squadron	WW.....	World War
W-1.....	Wing Personnel Office(r)	YP.....	Small Patrol Craft
		"Zero".....	Japanese fighter

Unit Commendations

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Citation by
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
of

The Wake detachment of the 1st Defense Battalion, U. S. Marine Corps, under command of
Major James P. S. Devereux, U. S. Marines

and

Marine Fighting Squadron 211 of Marine Aircraft Group 21, under command of
Major Paul A. Putnam, U. S. Marines

and

Army and Navy personnel present

“The courageous conduct of the officers and men who defended Wake Island against an overwhelming superiority of enemy air, sea, and land attacks from December 8 to 22, 1941, has been noted with admiration by their fellow countrymen and the civilized world, and will not be forgotten so long as gallantry and heroism are respected and honored. They are commended for their devotion to duty and splendid conduct at their battle stations under most adverse conditions. With limited defensive means against attacks in great force, they manned their shore installations and flew their aircraft so well that five enemy warships were either sunk or severely damaged, many hostile planes shot down, and an unknown number of land troops destroyed.”

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

GENERAL ORDERS }
No. 21 }

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, April 30, 1942

Citation of units in the United State Forces in the Philippines.—As authorized by Executive Order 9075 (sec. II, Bull. 11, W. D., 1942), a citation in the name of the President of the United States, as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, is awarded to the following-named units. The citation reads as follows:

The Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays and Naval and Marine Corps units serving therein, United States Forces in the Philippines, are cited for outstanding performance of duty in action, during the period from March 14 to April 9, 1942, inclusive.

Although subjected repeatedly to intense and prolonged artillery bombardment by concealed hostile batteries in Cavite Province and to heavy enemy aerial attacks, during the period above-mentioned, and despite numerous casualties and extensive damage inflicted on defensive installations and utilities, the morale, ingenuity, and combat efficiency of the entire command have remained at the high standard which has impressed fighting men the world over.

On March 15, approximately 1,000 240-mm projectiles were fired at Forts Frank and Drum, and large numbers of lesser caliber projectiles struck Forts Hughes and Mills. Again on March 20, over 400 240-mm shells were fired at Fort Frank and a lesser number at Fort Drum, while enemy air echelons made a total of 50 attacks on Fort Mills with heavy aerial bombs.

During the entire period all units maintained their armament at a high degree of efficiency, while seaward defense elements executed effective counter battery action. Antiaircraft batteries firing at extreme ranges exacted a heavy toll of hostile attacking planes, and Naval and Marine units from exposed stations assured the defense of the beaches and approaches to the fortified islands. By unceasing labor and regardless of enemy activity, essential utilities were restored and the striking power of the command maintained unimpaired.

As a result of their splendid combined efforts, ruggedness, and devotion to duty the various units and services comprising the Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays frustrated a major hostile attempt to reduce the efficiency of the fortified islands.

Units included in above citation: 59th Coast Artillery, 60th Coast Artillery (AA), 91st Coast Artillery (PS), 92d Coast Artillery (PS), Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays, Medical Detachment, Ordnance Detachment, Quartermaster Detachments (American and Philippine Scouts), Finance Detachment, 1st Coast Artillery (PA) (less 2d Battalion), Company A, 803d Engineer Battalion (Aviation) (Separate), detachments DS Army Mine Planter Harrison (American and Philippine Scouts), 4th U. S. Marines, U. S. Navy Inshore Patrol, Manila Bay area, Naval Force District Headquarters Fort Mills, Naval Forces Mariveles Area Philippine Islands, Battery D, 2d Coast Artillery (PA), 1st Platoon Battery F, 2d Coast Artillery (AA), (PA), 2d Platoon Battery F, 2d Coast Artillery (AA), (PA).

(A. G. 201.54 (4-12-42))

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General

G. C. MARSHALL
Chief of Staff

GENERAL ORDERS }
No. 22 }

WAR DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON, April 30, 1942

Citation of units of both military and naval forces of the United States and Philippine Governments.—As authorized by Executive Order 9075 (sec. II, Bull. 11, W. D., 1942), a citation in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, is awarded to all units of both military and naval forces of the United States and Philippine Governments engaged in the defense of the Philippines since December 7, 1941 to 10 May 1942.

A. G. 210.54 (4-12-42).

(Closing date auth. by W. D. G. O. #46 of 1948)

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General

G. C. MARSHALL
Chief of Staff

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
Washington.

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP TWENTY-TWO

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For conspicuous courage and heroism in combat at Midway Island during June, 1942. Outnumbered five to one, MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP TWENTY-TWO boldly intercepted a heavily escorted enemy bombing force, disrupting their attack and preventing serious damage to island installations. Operating with half of their dive-bombers obsolete and in poor mechanical condition which necessitated vulnerable glide bombing tactics, they succeeded in inflicting heavy damage on Japanese surface units of a large enemy task force. The skill and gallant perseverance of flight and ground personnel of MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP TWENTY-TWO, fighting under tremendously adverse and dangerous conditions, were essential factors in the unyielding defense of Midway."

For the President.

FRANK KNOX,
Secretary of the Navy.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
Washington.

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

SIXTH DEFENSE BATTALION, FLEET MARINE FORCE, REINFORCED,
for service as follows :

"For outstanding heroism in support of military operations prior to and during the Battle of Midway, June 1942. Assuming a tremendous operational and service load in preparing defenses of Midway against anticipated Japanese attack, the officers and men of the SIXTH Defense Battalion carried on intensive night battle training, completed and installed underwater obstacles, unloaded and distributed supplies, emplaced guns and constructed facilities for stowing ammunition and for protecting personnel. Alert and ready for combat when enemy planes came in to launch high and dive-bombing attacks and low-level strafing attacks on June 4, they promptly opened and maintained fire against the hostile targets, downing 10 planes during the furious 17-minute action which resulted in the destruction of the Marine galley and mess-hall, equipment, supplies and communication facilities. Working as an effective team for long periods without relief, this Battalion cleared the debris from the bomb-wrecked galley, reestablished disrupted communications, and serviced planes, thereby contributing greatly to the success of operations conducted from this base. The high standards of courage and service maintained by the SIXTH Defense Battalion reflect the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with the SIXTH Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, Reinforced, consisting of the SIXTH Defense Battalion, attached personnel of the Third Defense Battalion, 22nd and 23rd Provisional Marine Companies and "C" and "D" Companies of the Second Raider Battalion are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JOHN L. SULLIVAN,
Secretary of the Navy.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
Washington.

4 FEBRUARY 1943.

Cited in the Name of
The President of the United States
THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED
Under command of
Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, U. S. M. C.

CITATION :

"The officers and enlisted men of the First Marine Division, Reinforced, on August 7 to 9, 1942, demonstrated outstanding gallantry and determination in successfully executing forced landing assaults against a number of strongly defended Japanese positions on Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, Florida and Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, completely routing all the enemy forces and seizing a most valuable base and airfield within the enemy zone of operations in the South Pacific Ocean. From the above period until 9 December, 1942, this Reinforced Division not only held their important strategic positions despite determined and repeated Japanese naval, air and land attacks, but by a series of offensive operations against strong enemy resistance drove the Japanese from the proximity of the airfield and inflicted great losses on them by land and air attacks. The courage and determination displayed in these operations were of an inspiring order."

FRANK KNOX,
Secretary of the Navy.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,

Washington.

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

NINTH MARINE DEFENSE BATTALION

for service as follows :

"For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces at Guadalcanal, November 30, 1942, to May 20, 1943; Rendova-New Georgia Area, June 30 to November 7, 1943; and at Guam, Marianas, July 21 to August 20, 1944. One of the first units of its kind to operate in the South Pacific Area, the NINTH Defense Battalion established strong seacoast and beach positions which destroyed 12 hostile planes attempting to bomb Guadalcanal, and further engaged in extensive patrolling activities. In a 21-day-and-night training period prior to the Rendova-New Georgia assault, this group calibrated and learned to handle new weapons and readily effected the conversion from a seacoast unit to a unit capable of executing field artillery missions. Joining Army Artillery units, special groups of this battalion aided in launching an attack which drove the enemy from the beaches, downed 13 of a 16-bomber plane formation during the first night ashore and denied the use of the Munda airfield to the Japanese. The NINTH Defense Battalion aided in spearheading the attack of the Army Corps operating on New Georgia and, despite heavy losses, remained in action until the enemy was routed from the island. Elements of the Battalion landed at Guam under intense fire, established beach defenses, installed antiaircraft guns and later contributed to the rescue of civilians and to the capture or destruction of thousands of Japanese. By their skill, courage and aggressive fighting spirit, the officers and men of the NINTH Defense Battalion upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to and serving with the NINTH Defense Battalion during the above mentioned periods are authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JOHN L. SULLIVAN,
Secretary of the Navy.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
Washington.

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the

FIRST SEPARATE ENGINEER BATTALION

for service as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations on Guadalcanal, December 10, 1942, to February 27, 1943; Tinian from August 20, 1944, to March 24, 1945; and Okinawa from April 14 to September 2, 1945. Faced with numerous and difficult problems in engineering throughout two major campaigns, the First Separate Engineer Battalion initiated new techniques and procedures in construction, repair and maintenance, executing its missions under adverse conditions of weather and terrain and in spite of Japanese shellings, artillery fire, bombing raids, sickness and tropical storms. Technically skilled, aggressive and unmindful of great personal danger, the officers and men of this gallant Battalion constructed, developed and maintained vital routes of communication, airfields and camp facilities; they served as combat engineer units in performing demolitions, mine detection and disposal and bomb disposal tasks in support of various units of the Fleet Marine Force; and they built bridges and repaired air-bombed air strips toward the uninterrupted operations of Allied ground and aerial forces. Undeterred by both mechanical and natural limitations, the First Separate Engineer Battalion completed with dispatch and effectiveness assigned and unanticipated duties which contributed immeasurably to the ultimate defeat of Japan and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

All personnel attached to the First Separate Engineer Battalion during any of the above mentioned periods are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

JAMES FORRESTAL,
Secretary of the Navy.

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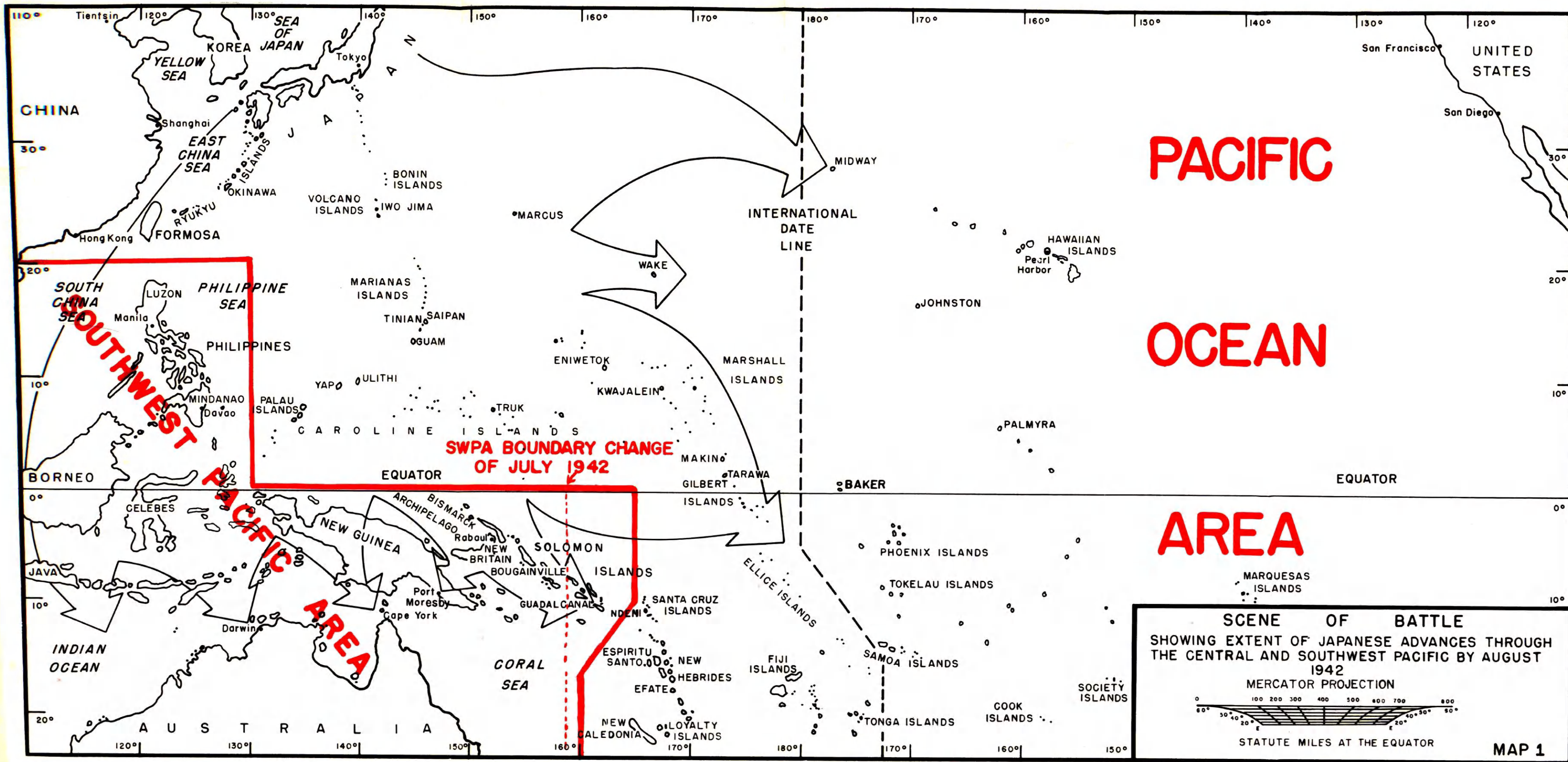
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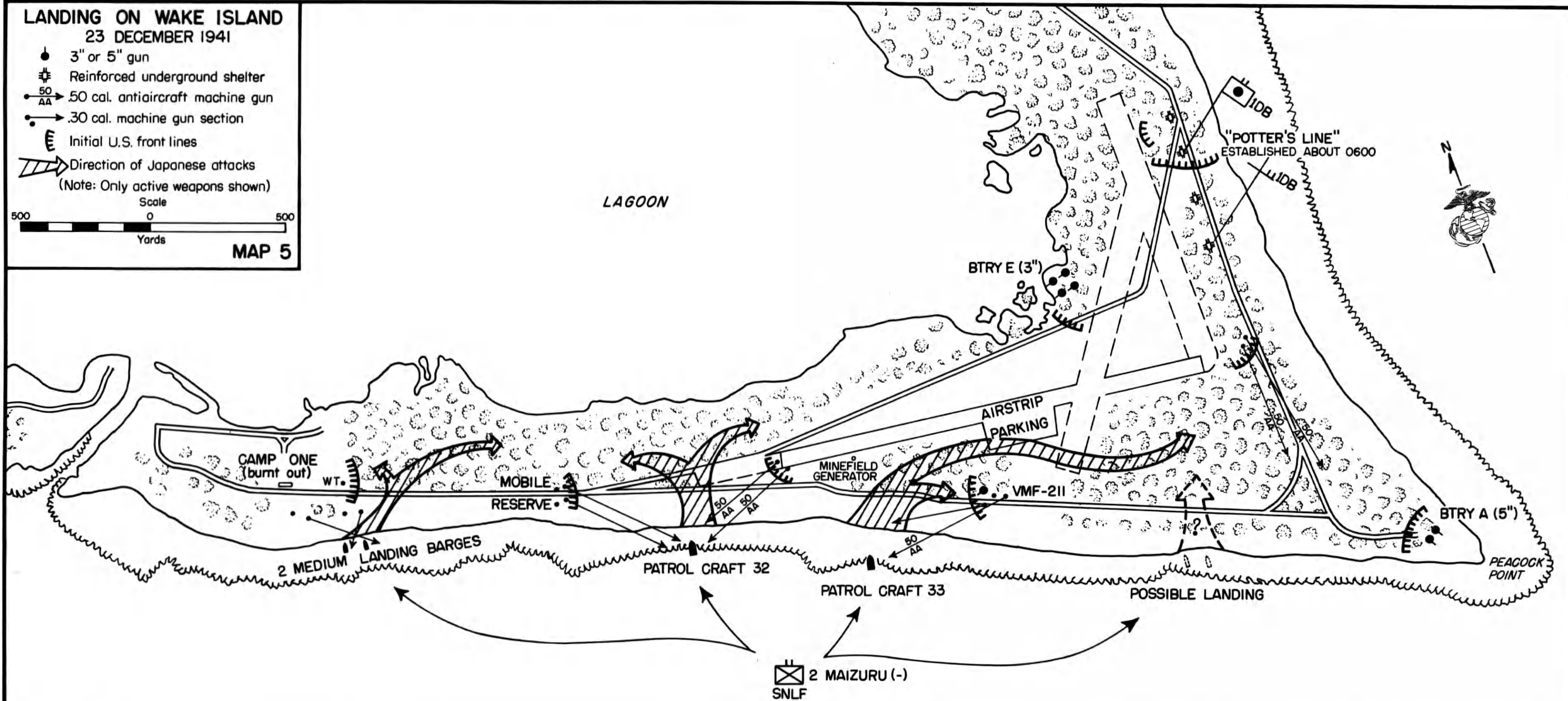
LANDING ON WAKE ISLAND

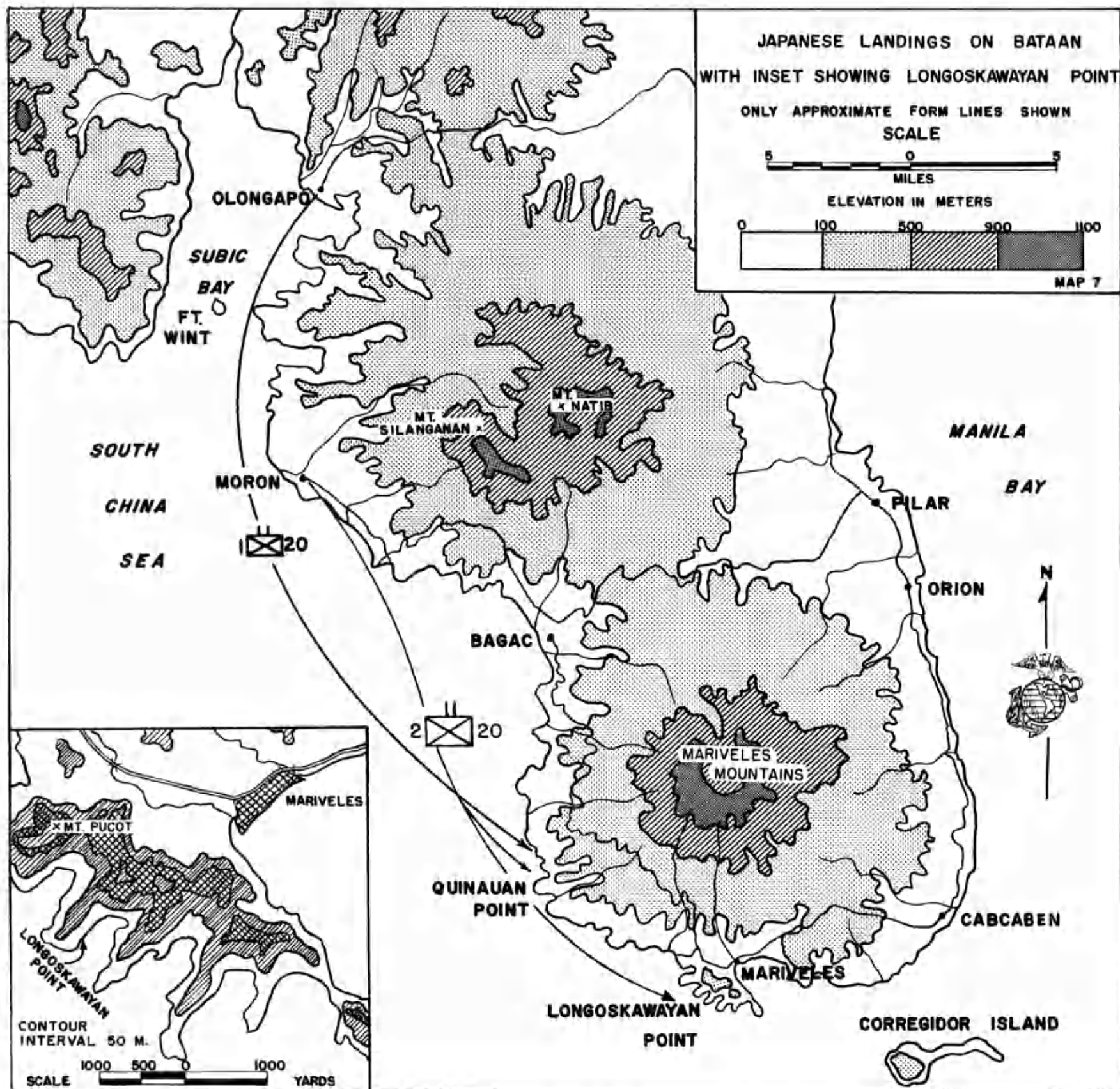
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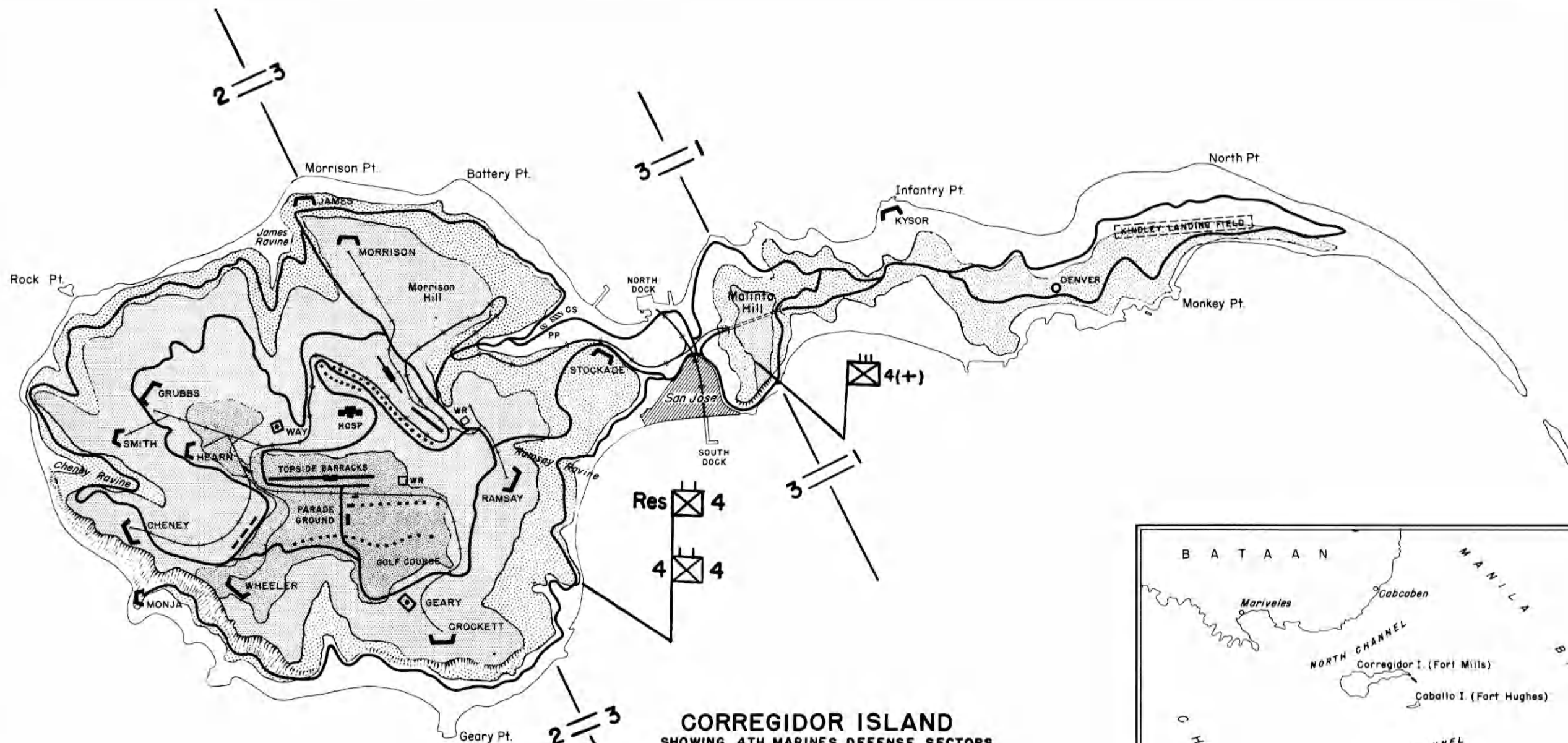
- 3" or 5" gun
- ⊛ Reinforced underground shelter
- 50 AA → 50 cal. antiaircraft machine gun
- .30 cal. machine gun section
- E Initial U.S. front lines
- Direction of Japanese attacks
(Note: Only active weapons shown)

Scale
500 0 500
Yards

MAP 5

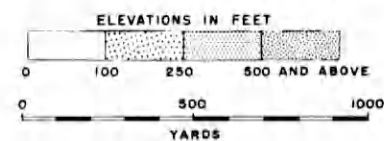




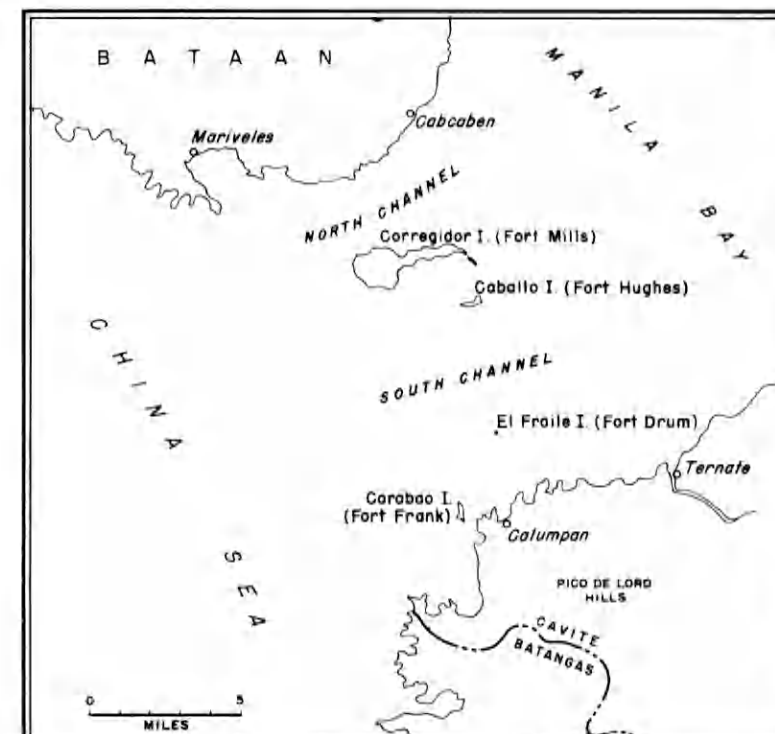


CORREGIDOR ISLAND
SHOWING 4TH MARINES DEFENSE SECTORS

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--|-----------------------|
| | GUN BATTERY | | BARRACKS AND QUARTERS |
| | 12" MORTAR BTRY | | WR WATER RESERVOIR |
| | AA BATTERY | | CS COLD STORAGE |
| | ROAD | | PP POWER PLANT |



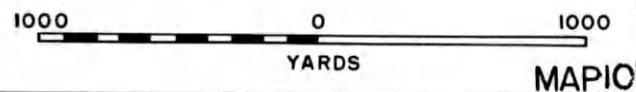
MAP 8



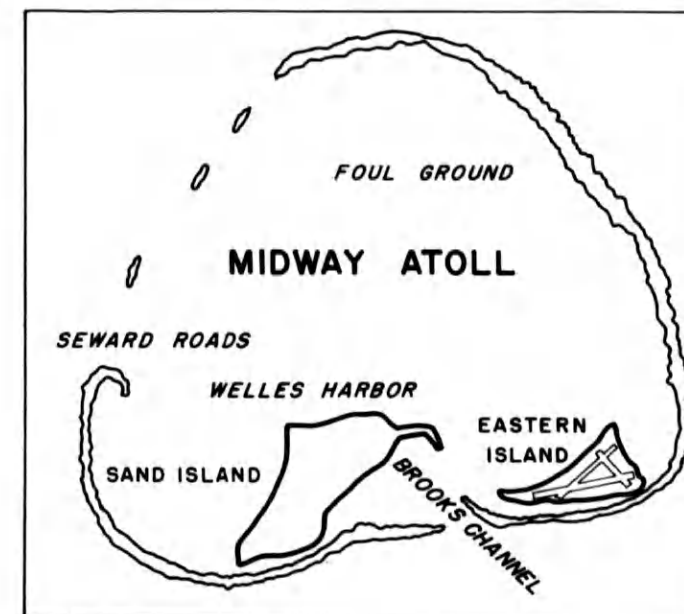
MIDWAY ISLANDS

JUNE 1942

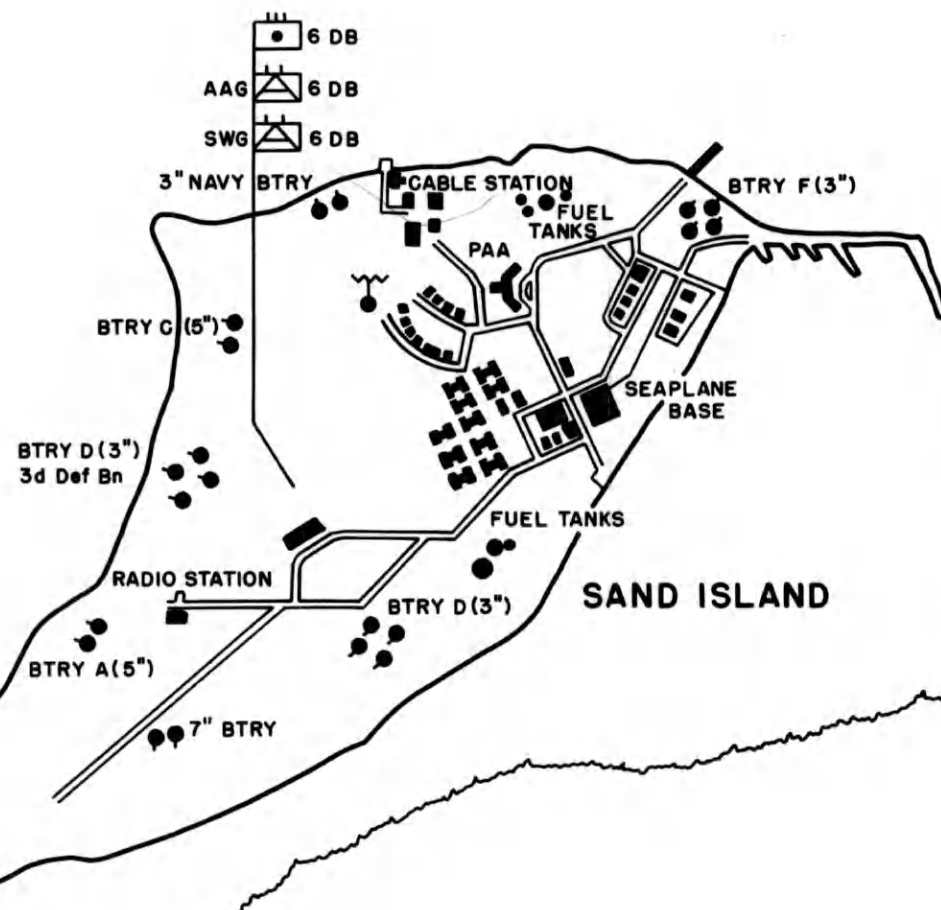
- - Gun 3" or larger
- - Command Post
- ⚡ - Radar



LAGOON

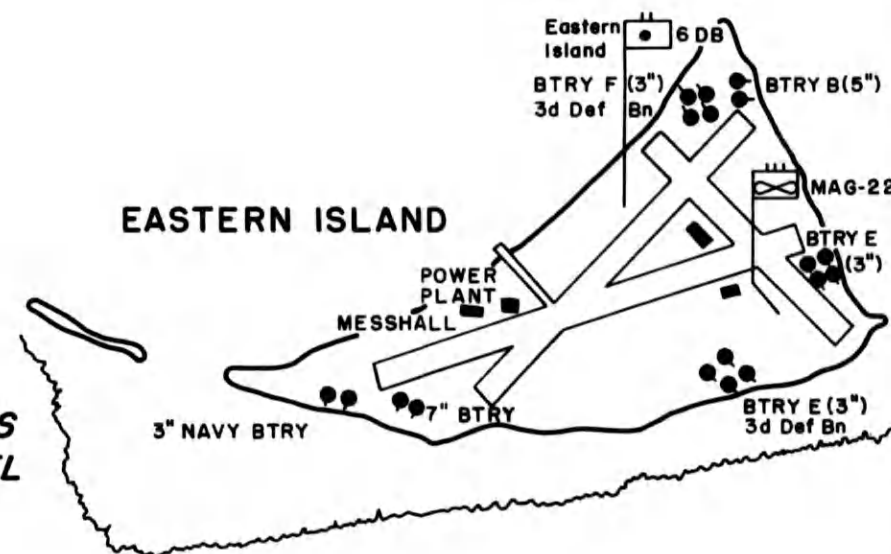


WELLES HARBOR



BROOKS CHANNEL

EASTERN ISLAND



PACIFIC OCEAN

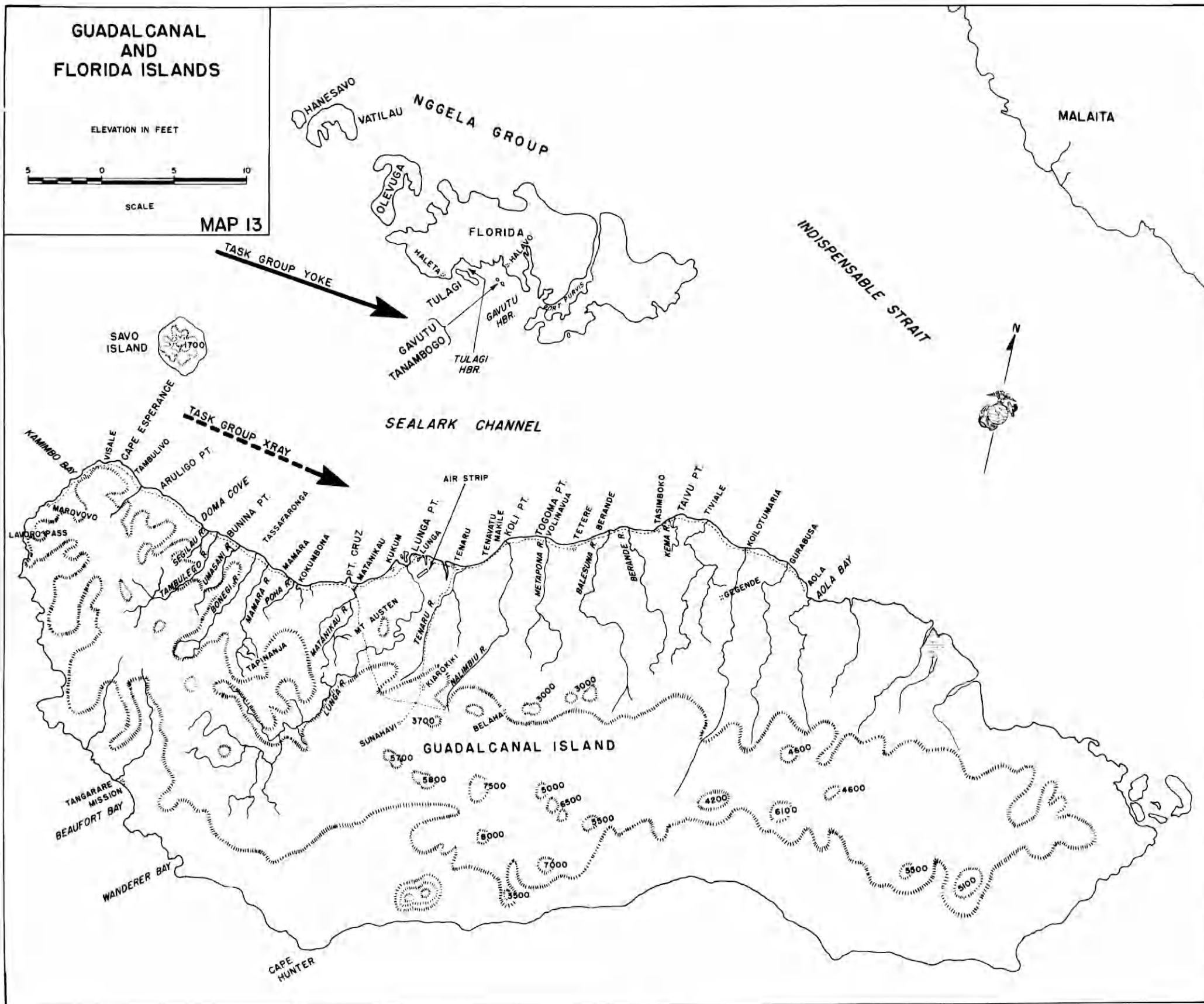
GUADALCANAL AND FLORIDA ISLANDS

ELEVATION IN FEET



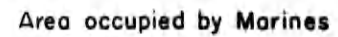
SCALE

MAP 13



GUADALCANAL, 7 AUGUST

GUADALCANAL, 7 AUGUST



1000 0 1000

Yards

MAP 14



ILU RIVER

**BLOCK
FOUR
RIVER**

Spt  1 Mar Div

Beach Red

Airstrip
1000 yds

"Grassy Knoll"
8 miles approx

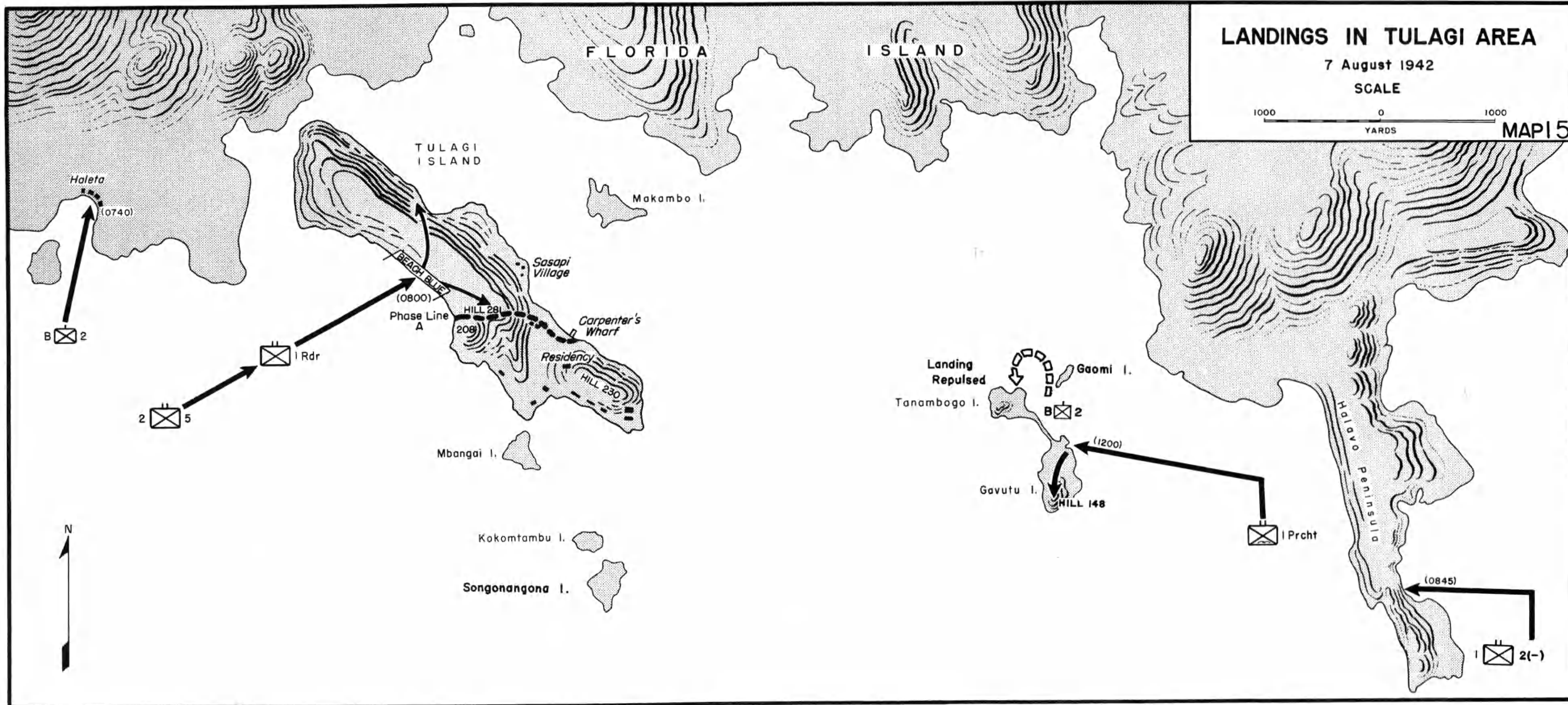
LANDINGS IN TULAGI AREA

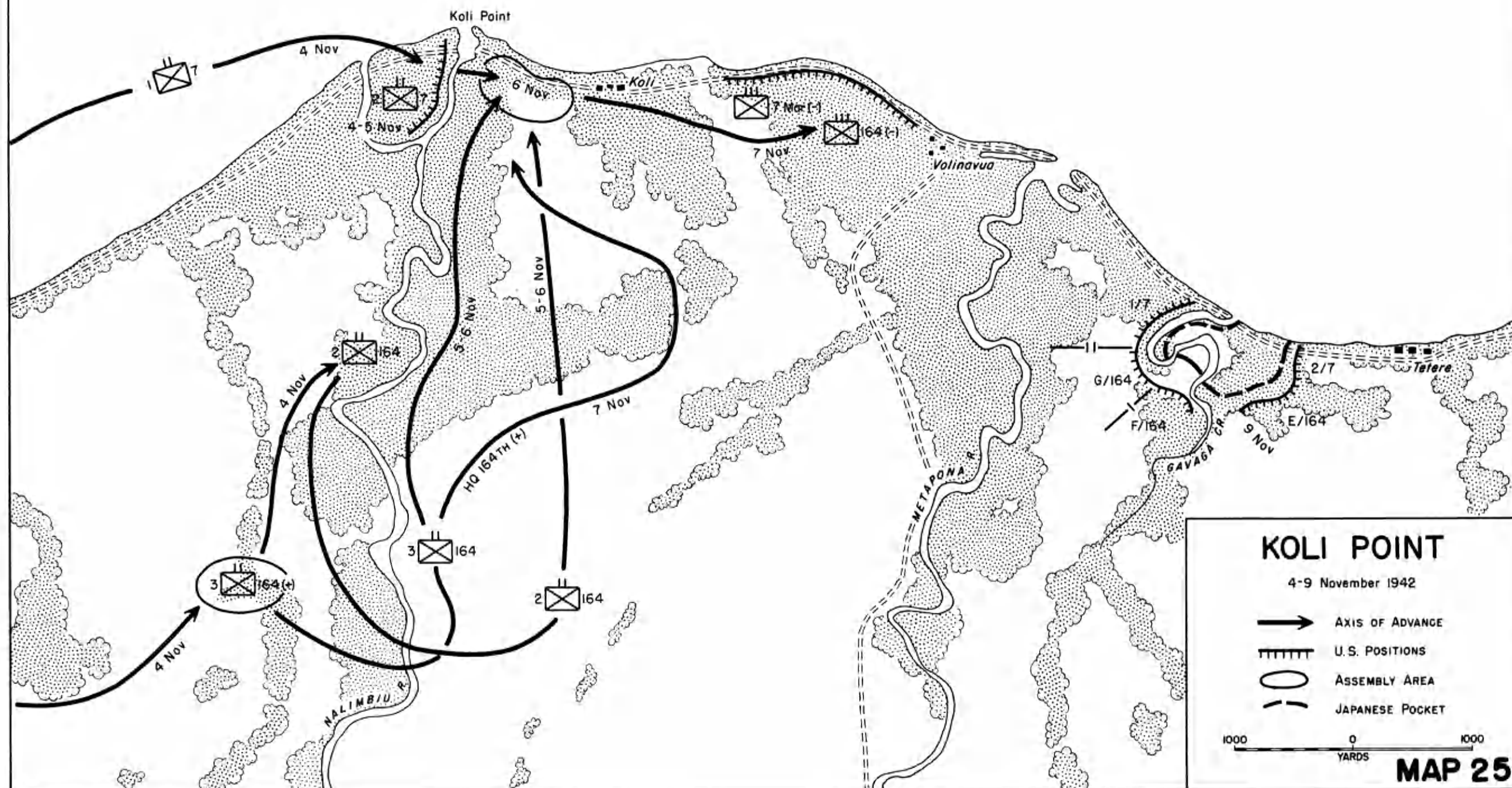
7 August 1942

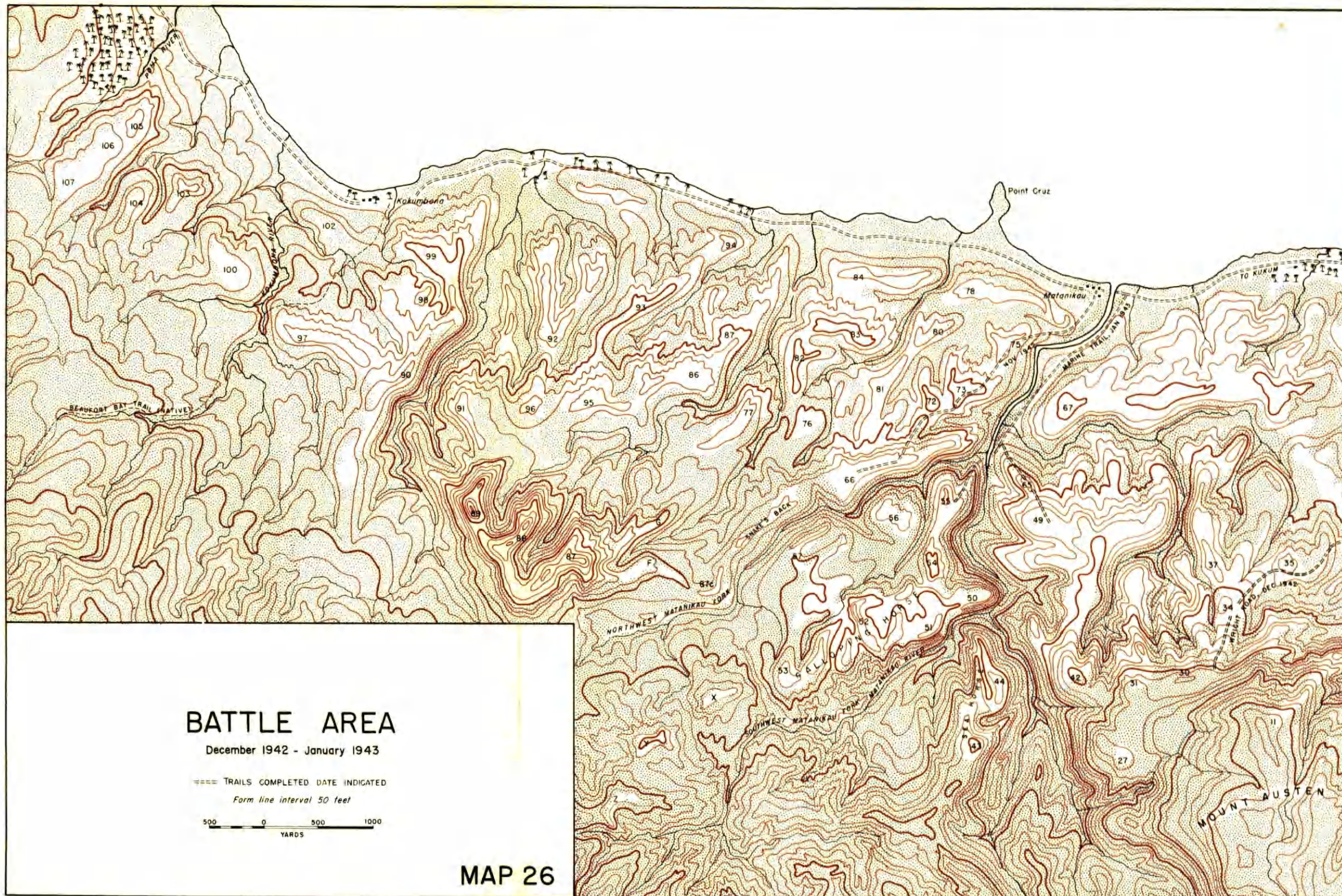
SCALE

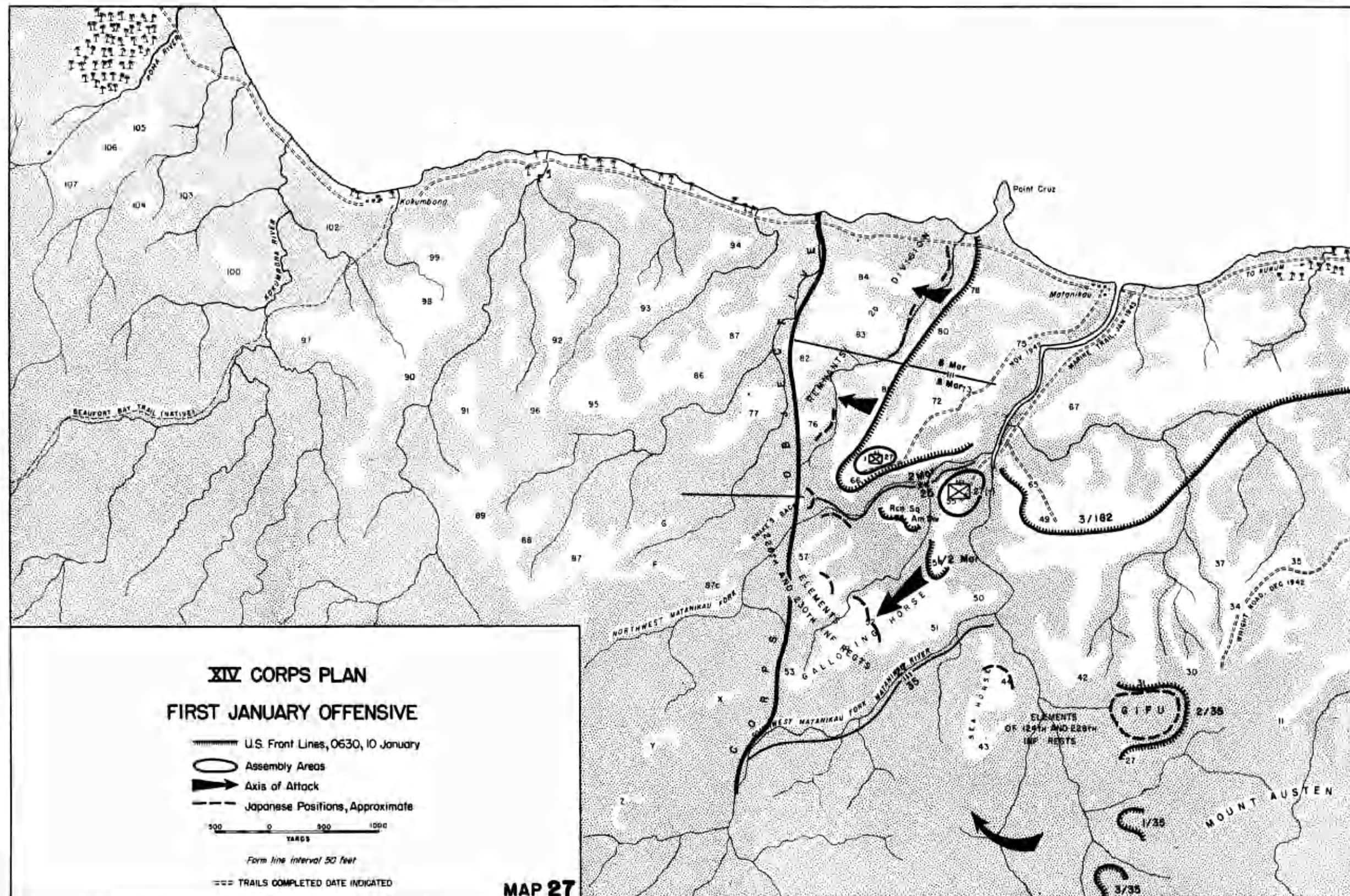
1000 0 1000
YARDS

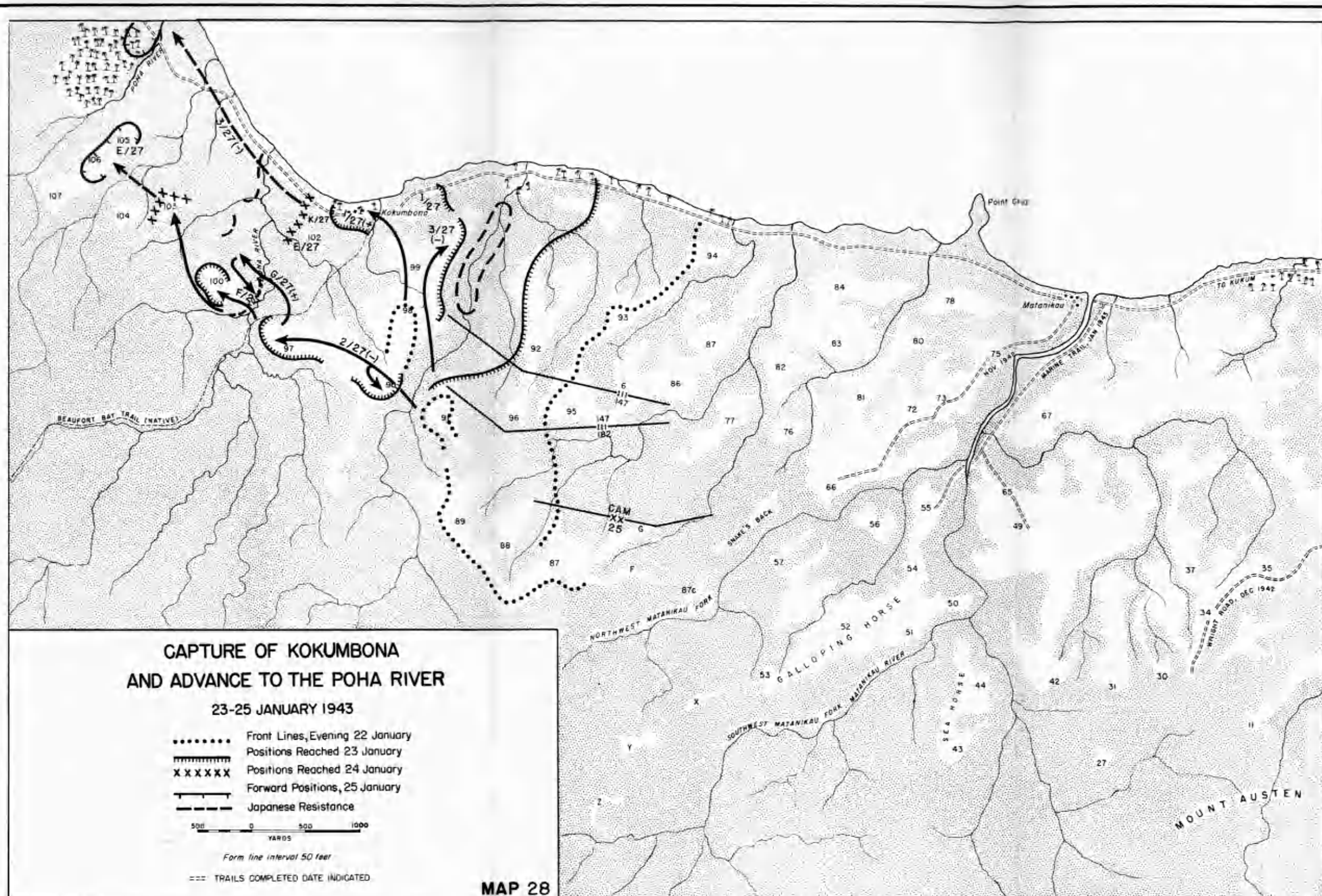
MAP 15











CAPTURE OF KOKUMBONA AND ADVANCE TO THE POHA RIVER

23-25 JANUARY 1943

- Front Lines, Evening 22 January
- Positions Reached 23 January
- X X X X X Positions Reached 24 January
- Forward Positions, 25 January
- Japanese Resistance

500 0 500 1000
YARDS

Form line interval 50 feet

--- TRAILS COMPLETED DATE INDICATED

MAP 28